New Statesman

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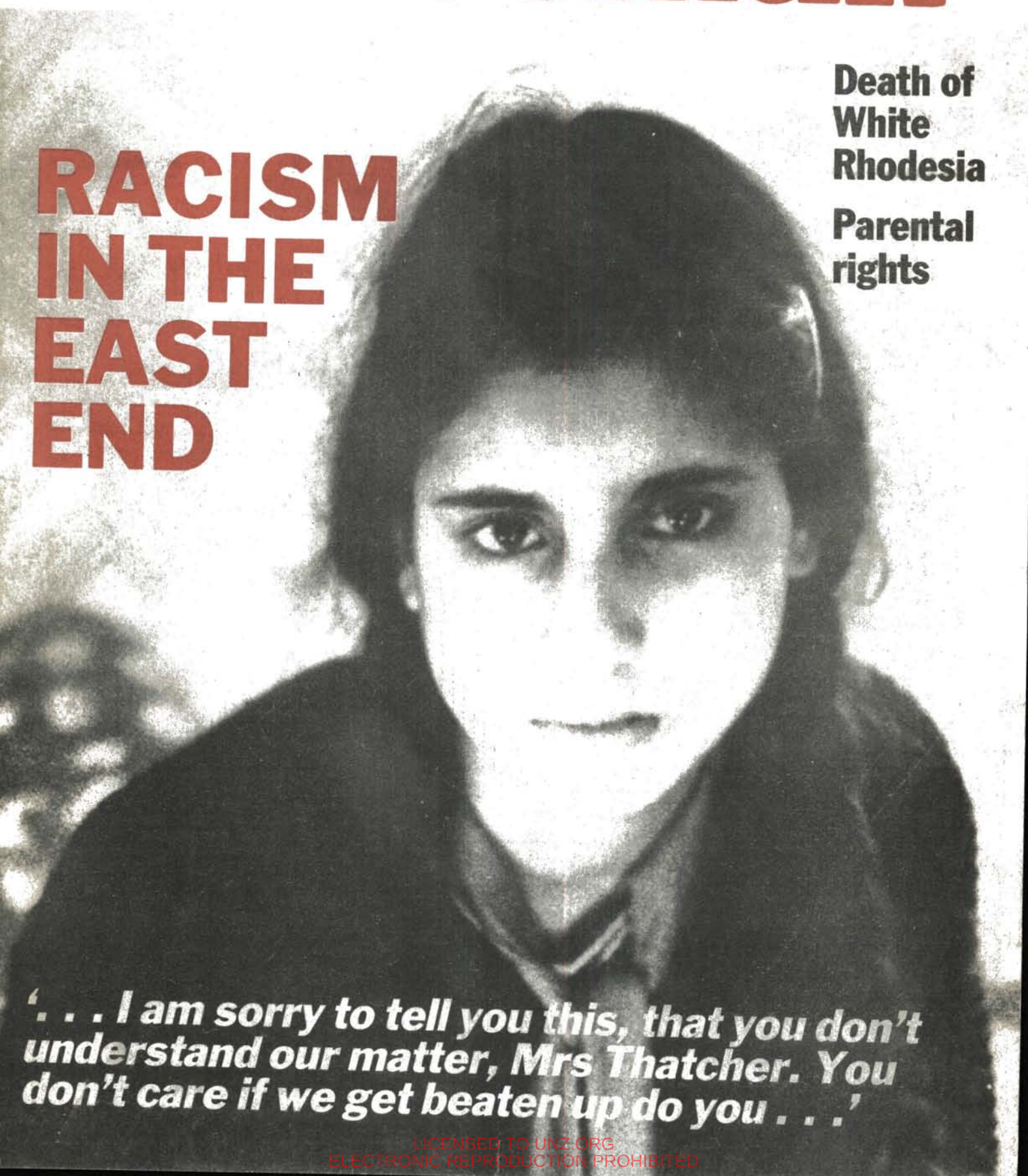
RACISM IN THE EAST END

Death of White Rhodesia

Parental rights



'. . . I am sorry to tell you this, that you don't understand our matter, Mrs Thatcher. You don't care if we get beaten up do you . . .'

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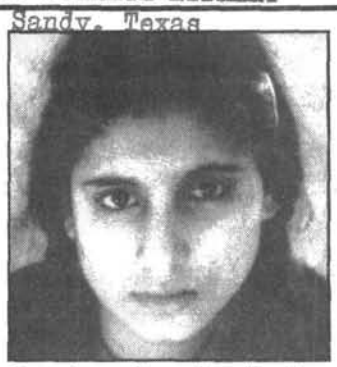

Coverphoto: Peter Stone/Syndication International. The picture shows the daughter who kept a diary of the frequent assaults on her family

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New Statesman Vol 105 No 2710 25 February 1983

Breach in pay policy

DESPITE ALL THE ATTEMPTS by the government to save face, the fact is that the water workers have knocked a great hole through the dyke holding down levels of pay in the public sector.

At a tactical level it has been a reverse for the government of its own making. While formally remaining apart from the negotiations, the message came down loud and clear from No 10 that the Prime Minister wanted another trade union scalp for her belt before the election. The Water Council, duly constrained, did not make the kind of increased offer early in the negotiations that might have settled the matter sooner and at a lower level.

But the fundamental problem is not a tactical one for the government. It goes to the heart of the way in which its policy over incomes has been conducted from the start. For it never accepted that there was a basic flaw in its approach, so far as the public sector was concerned.

Since there was to be no 'formal' policy for incomes, levels of pay were to be settled by collective bargaining. So far as the private sector was concerned this approach has kept the government and Whitehall for the most part out of becoming involved in questions of pay. It was simply the task of the Chancellor to undermine the bargaining position of workers by creating the deepest and most prolonged recession and the highest levels of unemployment since the 1930s.

But this approach never could give an answer so far as the public sector is concerned. For there, the government – directly or indirectly – *is* the employer and, whether it attends the negotiations or keeps a formal distance, it is involved in the outcome. It is involved because wage settlements in the public sector have implications for the economy and for government finance that cannot be treated as residuals of no consequence. And it is involved because, as with Mrs Thatcher's determination at the start to increase police and armed services pay, public sector pay settlements inevitably reflect the prejudices and policies of the government of the day.

Until now the government has managed roughly to cover this yawning gap in its policy by unjustified fiat. A de facto annual 'norm' for pay increases in the public sector has been set up by the Treasury. Any public sector settlement above that has carried the risk of Prime Ministerial retaliation on other fronts. It is surprising – and a measure of Mrs Thatcher's authoritarian power – that such a way of settling pay has lasted at all for three years. It clearly could not last very much longer. For, except in the short term, there has to be at least rough equity in the settling of pay levels. Otherwise uncontainable political and practical forces break down any restraints.

Since – even in Thatcher's Britain – market forces and considerations of profitability do not and cannot play any significant part in the public sector, sooner or later other factors have to be brought into these negotiations. As all past experience suggests, the principle ones are comparisons with earnings in the private sector and comparisons with other earnings within the public sector itself.

The same considerations would apply to an incoming Labour government. A situation in which the water workers win a high award on the basis of the quite justified claim that their earnings have fallen behind, after which Mr David Basnett can claim that the settlement will be part of an increased claim on behalf of those others concerned, is not the basis for a stable or a socialist order for incomes. □

Feather-bedded farmers

AN MP ONCE announced that he had found the solution to all of British Leyland's problems. (He was Matthew Parris, a young Tory, and the idea does not seem to have done his career much good.) The government, he said, should lay down a selling price for BL motor cars, which should be set at a level that would produce a profitable return on the money invested in the company. If, by some chance, this price meant that BL could not sell all the cars it produced, the EEC should intervene to buy up the surplus stock. These should then be stored at some place like Canvey Island, or sold off to the Russians at half price.

This parody of the Common Agricultural Policy and other associated measures of farm support was given point again this week, with the publication of the annual White Paper on agriculture. As unemployment soars past three million, as average wage settlements are held down firmly in single figures, as the unending recession grinds on with still no sign of any serious economic recovery, Mr Peter Walker is proud to announce that farmers' net income rose in the past year by 45 per cent.

There is, first, the question of the national inequity that flows from such an increase in income to a social group that is already highly paid, engaged in an activity built around the avoidance of income tax and the accumulation of wealth by capital gains as the value of farm land continues to rise – largely because of ever more fiscal incentives to own land. But there is also the question of why farming in this country is so 'successful' and so 'profitable'. It is a question that Tory politicians and theorists – for all their professional concern for improving efficiency, the free play of market forces and meeting the requirements of the consumer at a price the consumer can afford – never seem to ask themselves.

The reason why is clear and cynical. It is that agriculture enjoys high subsidies, high protection from world competition and is subject to extensive and detailed planning by central government. Since these are things that conflict with Tory ideology, the issues involved are kept firmly off any agenda. Even for a party and a Cabinet in which landowners and farmers are still so strongly represented, however, there might at least be some token recognition of the total contradiction between the policy and attitude adopted towards agriculture and those shown to manufacturing industry. □

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Unpalatable facts behind minibus schemes

NEXT WEEK a public inquiry will open into a proposal to fill London's streets with up to 500 minibuses. This proposal is the product of a group of right-wingers linked with the Prime Minister's personal economic adviser, Professor Alan Walters.

Walters and his friends say that minibuses can operate a cheap and profitable public transport system under private management. But in their enthusiasm for minibuses (which is essentially an enthusiasm for private enterprise) they overlook many unpalatable facts about minibus operations in cities which they themselves hold up as examples. These include the poor safety record of minibuses (in Istanbul over half of road accidents involve a minibus), the frequent failure of minibuses to operate as planned and the illegal nature of many minibus systems.

The London minibus proposal is being promoted by AMOS – Associated Minibus Operators. The front man for this off-the-peg company (which, according to Companies House records has only £2 of its nominal £10,000 of shares issued) is Anthony Shephard, 52.

Shephard was intimately involved in introducing legal Hong Kong minibuses in 1968/9, when he was Traffic Commissioner in the Hong Kong government. After taking early retirement from the Hong Kong service at the age of 42 he was instrumental in setting up a similar minibus system in Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia, in 1975. He has subsequently acted as a consultant for the World Bank, where Professor Walters used to work, on other minibus schemes.

The AMOS plan is to run four routes across central London, from such places as Neasden and Plumstead. There will be minibuses every two minutes during rush hour and a maximum fare of 70p. AMOS will buy the Ford minibuses and lease them to individual operators. AMOS will be responsible for the control and discipline of its operators, who in turn will pay the company for the franchise. The intention is to run the first four routes from end to end, without any intermediate turning point.

This is likely to be highly optimistic. The whole point of the AMOS scheme is that individual drivers have an incentive to make money; they also have the incentive, as private bus operators had in the 1920s, to stop the bus and turn the bus round as soon as they see a large queue waiting at a stop on the other side of the road.

Anthony Shephard on the road

This is precisely the practice that has grown up in Kuala Lumpur. For the first year the system operated more or less as intended, but it then began to change, with drivers turning short, or alternatively asking passengers for an extra fare to complete their journey. When the government tried to enforce traffic regulations the minibus operators went on strike. In a 1979 article on the scheme, Professor Walters glossed over this with: 'In practice they ply routes according to their judgment of the profitability of the traffic.'

The net effect of minibus competition would be to cream off London Transport's revenue. Shephard himself says that the Hong Kong minibuses cost the public transport system about ten per cent of its revenue. London Transport estimates its loss at £10 million a year.

Another question is whether the minibuses will be reasonably maintained. AMOS says it will have a contract with a Ford dealer, but it will be up to individual operators to get their vehicles serviced. But where such schemes exist, operators often scrimped on maintenance because a competitive profit margin is not high enough.

To Walters this is no problem. His 1979 study said that minibuses in Kuala Lumpur were hugely profitable. (He contrasted the profit with the city bus company, which made a modest profit.) Another academic wrote to the same journal pointing out that Walters' assessment of the cost of running a minibus had only included the wages for one driver – for a vehicle that was used over a 16-hour day. Walters dealt with this point with the reply: 'A plague on all experts'.

The most recently-published survey of minibus systems comes from the right-wing Adam Smith Institute. The survey, written by a World Bank friend of Walters', Professor Gabriel Roth, extols the minibus's efficiency and flexibility and exhorts London to give it a go. It fails to mention how at least some of these systems bend the law.

A British government report on minibuses in Kuala Lumpur found that they 'operate with almost complete disregard for the provisions of their franchise,' with illegal overcharging and overcrowding amongst other things. In Hong Kong the minibuses have been linked with organised crime. Judge Sir Alastair Blair-Kerr in his 1973 report on corruption quotes evidence given to him: 'It is said that groups of police officers are involved in the collection of payments from *pak pai* (minibus) drivers . . . frequently the "Collection" is far more than corruption in the true sense. It is plain extortion accompanied by veiled threats of violence at the hands of triad gangsters.'

The Hong Kong government's first white paper on transport, published in 1979, refers to the traffic congestion caused by minibuses with drivers 'congregating in unacceptable numbers at the kerbside and stopping in the middle of the road junctions . . . in an often selfish and aggressive endeavour to pick up passengers'. It continues: 'Law enforcement to stop these practices has proved extremely onerous for the police. As (minibuses) are mainly operated by individual owners and drivers it is difficult to regulate their method of operation and the trade is vulnerable to protection rackets (by triads).'

The finances of minibus schemes which have so impressed leading Tory advisers are based on the low wages paid in developing countries. Minibuses, with less than a third the capacity of a double deck bus, are very labour intensive. Nor is there any reason to think that Britain will be free of problems of regulation experienced in Hong Kong or Kuala Lumpur. Law enforcement has been a problem with some minicab operations.

The only European example which the Adam Smith Institute quotes is Belfast. There the 'black taxis' – the local name for minibuses – have succeeded because the city bus firms have lost one fifth of their bus fleets through bombing and burning. The example of Belfast was also quoted approvingly by Ferdinand Mount in the London *Standard* in March 1982. Within weeks, Mount joined Walters as an adviser to the Prime Minister.

Next week's enquiry by London Transport will almost certainly reject the plan to introduce minibuses into London. But since the 1980 Transport Act, bus operators have been able to appeal to the Secretary of State for Transport to over-rule London Transport. With Mrs Thatcher's current advisers, the odds for a successful appeal must be good.

Mick Hamer

British grip on IT slips

BRITAIN will be out of the information technology industry in just seven years if the government does not change its policies towards it. That is the stark prediction of a working party consisting of senior managers in the IT companies, union officials and government representatives, and sponsored by the National Economic Development Office, NEDO. According to the working party's interim report, published this month, the consequences would be disastrous.

The information technology industry involves those related electronic technologies which process information – particularly in computers, telecommunications and office systems. Information technology products are also essential to the competitiveness of virtually all Britain's manufacturing and service industries. As the report notes, 'It is the kind of business we need in order to maintain a place as an advanced industrial nation'.

Although Britain's IT companies have a turnover of some £3 billion a year, and employ 150,000 people (a number that has fallen in recent years), the industry is small and fragmented, while competitors abroad dominated by US and, increasingly, Japanese companies, have specialised in cheaper high volume products which are more adaptable than those made here. Britain imports a higher proportion of the information technology products it uses than any of its major competitors, and the working party says that the proposed liberalisation of both telecommunications and cable television can only make this trend worse. And as one working party member, Tim Webb of ASTMS, put it, 'Once you're out of these industries, you don't get back in again'.

Despite the industry's importance, the government has not developed a coherent policy for it. 'While there is a plethora of welcome initiatives to stimulate the UK IT industry', the report says, 'these appear as a largely unco-ordinated response to a wide variety of competing demands'. These issues, the working party says, must be dealt with as a matter of 'urgent national priority' if Britain is to have an IT industry in 1990.

Andrew Curry

Policy for the UK Information Technology Industry is published by the National Economic Development Office, price £3.

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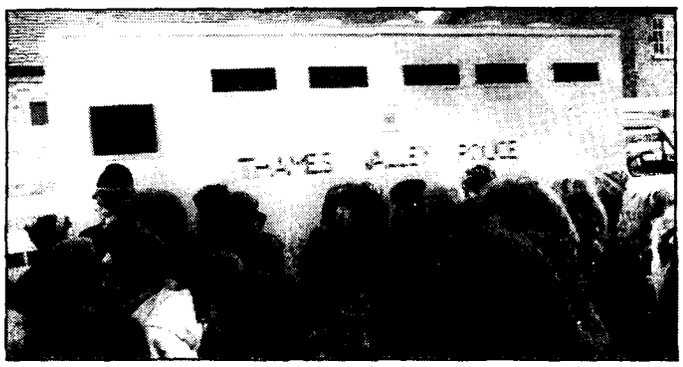
Greenham woman concussed in police van



Anita Corbin

The police van containing individual cages leaves Newbury

A GREENHAM Common peace protester suffered concussion while being transported in a police van to Holloway jail last Wednesday. Despite being transferred to the prison hospital for treatment, her husband was assured that she was perfectly fit, and in her cell.

Carole Harwood, 37, of Cardiff was sentenced to two weeks in prison on 16 February. She and a number of other women were transported to London locked in individual cages inside the van, each cage just wide enough for one person. The same style of van was used to take some of the defendants to Windsor police station last month. After being sentenced at Newbury last week, defendant Rebecca Johnson asked the magistrate to ensure the 'cage' vans were not used as the experience was very frightening and distressing. Magistrates' chairman D. H. Barton said the women's transport was not his responsibility but he publicly expressed the hope that the vans would not be used.

Ms Harwood hit her head on the side of the van when it stopped with a jolt. She began to vomit and suffer from headaches the following day. Her husband, Kevin Littlewood, received a message via her solicitor on Thursday evening that she was ill in the prison hospital. But when he phoned Holloway late that night, he was told she was not in the hospital wing and she was perfectly fit.

He visited Ms Harwood on Friday and, although she was obviously recovering, he asked to see the prison medical officer to discuss her condition and to find out why he had been misinformed. A prison officer refused this request point-blank and said he'd have to make an application to the governor in writing.

Ms Harwood told her husband that when she first felt ill, she was merely offered pain killers. Prison staff seemed reluctant to summon medical help until another prisoner threatened to make a complaint.

The governor of Holloway was not available for comment, but a Home Office spokesman said Mr Littlewood was not told of Ms Harwood's condition on Thursday night because of a 'miscommunication' problem. The spokesman added that he thought the prison officer's response to Mr Littlewood's request to see the doctor was 'very officious'. Prisoners' relatives should normally be given reasonable access to medical officers at Holloway.

Clare Hudson

Dirt in Dudley

THE WEST MIDLANDS borough of Dudley is planning to hand over the job of cleaning schools to private contractors – at the cost of dirtier schools.

A confidential report to a council committee on resources states that tenders from private contractors show that the cost of cleaning can be cut by up to 40 per cent. But to achieve this, says the report, cleaning standards will worsen considerably – down to 50 per cent below the recommended standard – most primary schools will have to do without a school caretaker, and all 800 of the authority's school cleaners will be made redundant. This is reckoned to produce an estimated saving for 1983/4 of £½ million – although redundancy payments to the cleaners would total over £200,000.

The tenders from the private contractors are based on a substantially reduced number of cleaning hours per school. The West Midlands Provincial Council's recommendation is 180 square foot of cleaning per cleaner per hour. Spending cuts have already worsened this to 220 – and the contractors' proposals will mean schools getting even less attention. For example, schools would have their floors vacuumed and mopped once a week, instead of every day, as at present.

Dudley's 'dirty-schools' policy has been condemned by local branches of NUPE and the NUT. Local authority cleaners have been asked by the council to submit a 'competitive' tender as well. But NUPE says it 'bitterly resents' having to tender for members' jobs to poorer specifications and at a lower hourly-wage rate. They suspect that the private tenders have been calculated on a loss-leader basis in the hope of future contracts rather than on the need to keep schools at a proper level of cleanliness. Teachers and heads are worried that the reduction in hygienic standards and the loss of caretakers will adversely affect the efficient running of schools.

Rick Rogers

MISCELLANY

Freewheeling

Is there a joker at work in Whitehall? It seems so. The latest issue of *British Business*, a magazine produced by the Departments of Industry and Trade, includes a report of a speech by Norman 'on-yer-bike' Tebbit. Next to this article, juxtaposed with a photograph of the grinning Tebbit, is a picture of a bicycle equipped with a 'Pedajet' fan (which is said to 'provide sufficient thrust to propel the rider along at speeds up to 12 mph' – handy for desperate job-seekers, no doubt). As if this were not enough, the woman riding the bike in the photograph bears a startling resemblance to Margaret Thatcher. What are they trying to tell us?

Topsy-turvy

Meanwhile, at Wicked Uncle Norman's own department, plans to conduct ethnic monitoring of the unemployed have been delayed. The plans involved putting up posters in dole offices, informing claimants that they were being monitored. Alas! According to *Red Tape* (newspaper of the Civil and Public Services Association), parts of the Gujarati-language posters were printed upside down, and they have all been recalled. Incidentally, while on the subject of the Secretary of State for Employment, it is worth noting that on the night of 28-29 March this year there will be a full moon. It just so happens that 29 March is Norman Tebbit's birthday. Creepy, huh?

Invisible man

Do you find that whole weeks can pass without the name 'David Howell' entering your head? If so, you are not alone: an inability to remember the name of our transport secretary is one of the commonest diseases in Britain. And now it's spreading to the continent. At a recent conference on roads, held in Brussels, the Belgian minister of transport concluded his conversation with a British road engineer by saying: 'Oh and do give my regards to your minister of transport when you next see him, whoever he is.'

Ready-wrapped

Contraceptives could soon be a common sight on supermarket shelves. The London Rubber Company, maker of Durex (which dominates the British sheath market), has hired a firm of market researchers to test public reaction to a new packaging range. The new packets rely on images of still waters, lonely sunsets and trees in autumn to convey the nature of the contents, rather than the current pictures of young couples prancing eagerly, hand in hand, through fields of swaying corn. The market researchers, Gerry Levens and Co, are asking people whether the new designs would be suitable for display in their local grocer's shop or supermarket, and whether they will attract young people. (The company has also approached the Responsible Society, a pro-family pressure group, for advice on how to appeal to the teenage market, only to be told that the idea is 'offensive to parents'.) Members of the public who have helped Gerry Levens and Co with their research in Basingstoke and Leeds have been given a Yorkie chocolate bar as a reward for their cooperation. Presumably a Mars bar was thought inappropriate in the circumstances.

Helping with inquiries

Happy ending dept: the Metropolitan Police's refusal to recognise *News Line* as a newspaper, reported in last week's *NS*, has now been rescinded; the paper's staff can once again enjoy (if that's the word) the full press facilities of Scotland Yard. Rather them than us.

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Dilly dally on the Piccadilly

LONDON TRANSPORT failed to tell the GLC that problems with the computer-controlled signalling network on the Piccadilly Line were so severe that its own working party had recommended that a halt should be called on the further introduction of such systems. One cause of the problems is that the system installed is, unlike human operators, unable to identify the passage of individual trains.

Last November, the working party from the Operation and Signalling Department produced a report criticising the 'severe and prolonged periods of disruption' following the introduction of automatic train control on the Piccadilly Line. As a consequence they recommended that 'the application of computer control on other lines in general should be *immediately* reappraised' (their italics).

Dave Wetzel, chairman of the GLC Transport Committee, said last week that the GLC had not been informed of this failure and that LT was in fact going ahead with the modernisation of three more lines. London Transport is due to report on the two-year Piccadilly trial this autumn, when it will make its case for more funds for new technology. Mr Wetzel will now be asking for advance information on the scheme.

According to the working party report 'Not only have the published advantages of computer control not been achieved . . . but the advantages in terms of reducing manning levels thought possible have so far been negated.' Disorganisation of train movements 'has caused routine maintenance by rolling stock staff to suffer and on occasions not to be carried out on the normal programmed basis.' The delays were two to four times higher than on other lines and passenger complaints 'increased dramatically'.

The National Union of Railwaymen will make the failure of computer control one of the central issues of a new campaign to save jobs. 2000 jobs are threatened in an efficiency drive. LT plans to run all nine lines from central control rooms at Euston, Kings Cross, Baker Street and Earls Court. But according to signalmen at Earls Court, twice as many workers have been needed to 'baby-sit' the new system. Earls Court engineers began their own campaign to win public support last week by handing out leaflets calling on LT to 'Stop the Misery' and abandon the computerised system.

London Transport has to improve the system quickly because the GLC made the proviso that 'consideration of any proposals for the further expansion of on-line control computer systems shall await the demonstration of proven benefits.' Last Friday, LT announced that despite the problems 'we are satisfied that it is the right standard for LT to use and further installations are planned.' On the same day, its own internal recorded-message system which details the state of all nine lines singled out the Piccadilly as 'the major incident line.'

Paul Walton

Paul Walton works for Computing *magazine which carries a full report on the Piccadilly signalling network this week.*

Law Lords' change of heart

THE House of Lords has taken the unusual step of reversing a decision which it had taken three years previously. The change of heart is good news for immigrants, and for upholders of the ancient right of *habeas corpus*.

The reluctance of the courts to restrain abuses by Immigration Officers has long been a scandal. The powers given by the Immigration Act to detain and remove illegal entrants are draconian – yet three years ago, in the *Zamir* case, the House of Lords held that an Immigration Officer need not even prove that a detainee was in fact an illegal entrant; it was enough that there were 'reasonable' grounds for believing it, and the court would not examine those grounds.

This conclusion flew in the face of what every law student knows about *habeas corpus*: the facts relied on to justify the exercise of a power of detention must be proved to the satisfaction of the court. In the judgment on 10 February, with two of the *Zamir* judges now outnumbered by three new appointees, the law Lords restored the principle of *habeus corpus* and made it clear that no one can be detained or removed as an illegal entrant unless Immigration Officers can prove that he or she really is here illegally. Furthermore, the burden of proof is a heavy one – a high degree of probability is demanded.

Greater willingness by the courts to restrain abuses of executive power is an important development. The Home Office says that 40 other cases of illegal entrants are due for review, while the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants puts the number considerably higher.

However, as the judges increase the pressure on Immigration Officers to justify their actions, the government is on the point of shifting the burden away from them on to immigrant husbands, who will have to prove that their marriages are 'genuine'.

Geoffrey Bindman

Dog-lovers tracked

MEMBERS OF the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection fear that their mail is being opened and phones tapped. One Somerset contact has now set up a register of all those whose mail appears to have been tampered with, and the BUAV has adopted a code for messages given over the phone.

Signs of clumsy mail interception have been evident for some time – starting before the present spate of letter bombs. BUAV has no direct links with either the Animal Liberation Front or the Animal Rights Militia – although their members may belong to various groups. But the BUAV has never been a formal target of police suspicion, or indeed of political attention of any sort.

Earlier this month, Jose Parry, a BUAV contact in Hatfield, spoke to Paddy Broughton, BUAV's national co-ordinator, about a raid by the ALF on Laundry Farm, the animal holding centre for Cambridge University, on 3 January. Six dogs, which the BUAV believed to be former pets, were released during the raid. But one dog was left behind because it had recently had an operation. Ms Broughton agreed to send Ms Parry a picture of this dog.

When the letter arrived, a day late despite first class posting, it had sellotape over the end, which Ms Broughton had not stuck on. Both the sellotape and the envelope had been cut. Ms Parry believes that the telephone conversation had been monitored and the letter then opened to see if the photograph would provide police with any clue about the photographer. Hatfield postmaster Colin George denies any tampering with the mail. Welwyn and Hatfield MP Chris Murphy is taking up the issue with the Home Office. BUAV's organiser Angela Walder also confirms that 'a lot' of her mail arrives late with sellotape on it, not stuck on by the sender.

The one that didn't get away

Simon Berlyn

Rabbiters' rights

IT IS certainly taking Department of the Environment Inspector, Mr Charles Russell, some time to make up his mind whether to give the green light to hotly-disputed plans by the Earl of Scarbrough to hire out 20 acres of land in South Yorkshire to a Rotherham business consortium for use as a golf club.

What started life two years ago as an uncontroversial little scheme for recreation for the middle classes in the pit village of Maltby has, however, thrown some light on how it was that landed proprietors ended up with large estates. For the main ground for objection to Lord Scarbrough's plan is that he is falsely claiming title to a total of 80 acres of land near to the pit village, and by implication, intends to draw rents of at least £2,000 a year from the golf club to which he is not entitled.

In a bid to stop Scarbrough's plans, Doncaster conservationist William Bunting, along with local objectors to the scheme, attempted to register the land as a Common, under the 1965 Commons Registration Act. The main opponent was Lord Scarbrough, who claimed that he owned the freehold. It then emerged that the Scarbrough family have had their eyes on annexing the land to their 2,000 acre estate in the area for some time. Indeed, they tried in 1879 to get Parliament to apply an enclosure award to it. Parliament rejected their claim to ownership.

The attitude of the people of Maltby to the idea of their Common becoming an exclusive golf club is not one of enthusiasm. According to evidence presented to Mr Russell's inquiry, they prefer to use it for snaring rabbits. Nevertheless, despite the local objections, Mr Russell at first refused to hear evidence of ownership of the Common, a strange thing, since it is that on which the objectors base their case. Only at the very end of a three day inquiry, did he finally agree to take written submissions on the matter. William Bunting sent in his in the first few days of January, as did the Leeds firm of solicitors, J. J. Pearlman on behalf of the other objectors.

Since then, Mr Russell has been considering whether there are any grounds for reversing, 104 years later, Parliament's decision that the land involved had never belonged to the Scarbrough family.

John Hatton

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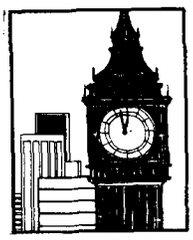

PETER KELLNER, Political Editor

Fleet Street goes hunting for a plot

WELL, WAS IT REALLY all got up by the press? Since Sunday morning almost every time the Press Association tape machines have chattered into action, the news had been of yet another prominent Labour MP or official denying that there is any plot to oust Michael Foot, insisting that Foot will lead Labour into the next general election, and swearing undying personal loyalty. One does not have to be unduly cynical to recall the occasion in 1972 when George McGovern, the newly chosen Democratic candidate for the US Presidency, said he was 'one thousand per cent behind Thomas Eagleton' – the Vice-presidential candidate. Within days Mr Eagleton was out.

That is the trouble with 'X under pressure to quit'-type stories. Whether true or untrue they attract instant denials. If the denials are too weak, the story is deemed to be true. If the denials are too strong – well, your average reporter is bound to conclude 'methinks they do protest too much'. So how can you issue an 'honest guv, straight up, cross my heart and hope to die' denial that will be believed? The short answer is, you can't.

My own conclusion about last weekend's flurry of press speculation is that it was kindled by the fantasies, fears and hopes of a few Labour MPs, and fanned by the excessive imagination of a few journalists faced with the need to fill their papers' front pages on a slow weekend. The *Daily Mail*'s lead story on Saturday – COME BACK JIM, ALL IS FORGIVEN! – was pure fantasy; the *Sunday Times's* lead story the next day was, as it were, applied fantasy. Michael Jones, the paper's political correspondent, reported in a story written jointly with Martin Kettle that the new anti-Foot rumblings had 'a new and more ominous element. Prominent left-wingers are beginning to discuss their price for co-operating with a Healey take-over, which they no longer rule out. "If we are going to play the part of Brutus, we want some cast-iron guarantees", one former Foot supporter said yesterday.'

I have spoken to the MP who recalls giving that quote to Jones. He is *not* a 'former' Foot supporter, but very much a current and active one. The discussion did *not* take place 'yesterday' – i.e., last Saturday – but over a casual lunch the previous Thursday. (That may seem a small point, but it was one of five 'yesterdays' or 'last nights' in the story; without them it would have been difficult to justify the concoction as news.)

Most seriously of all, the MP insists that the quote was taken wholly out of context and given exactly the reverse meaning to what he was telling Jones. According to the MP, Jones raised the possibility of Foot being pressured to resign. Jones suggested that if the Left were to acquiesce in Healey becoming leader, it would want to strike a hard bargain – for example over the content of the election manifesto. The MP recalls describing the 'cast-iron guarantees' the Left would need – not to imply that such a deal would be possible, but to demonstrate the opposite: that it was out of the question. 'I thought Mike Jones's idea was ludicrous, and I told him so', says the MP.

AND YET, AND YET. If it is untrue that there is any organised move to unseat Mr Foot, it is equally untrue to pretend that there are no murmurings of discontent. Suppose, just suppose, that enough MPs and trade union leaders did turn their minds to thoughts of removing the Labour leader. What options are available?

Labour's new rules for replacing a leader who retires, dies or gets carried off kicking and screaming by men in white coats are clear – up to a point. The relevant standing order states:

> When the Party Leader, for whatever reason, becomes permanently unavailable, the Deputy Party Leader shall automatically become Party Leader until a new Party Leader is elected at a Party Conference.

So just as the Queen succeeded to the throne the moment her father died, so Healey would become leader the moment Foot departed. The Labour leader is gone: long live the Labour leader.

It would then be up to Labour's National Executive to decide whether to hold a special party conference for the purposes of a leadership election, or whether to leave Healey in place until the following annual conference. The rules lay down no timetable. It is here that the discretion allowed under the rules is likely to cause trouble. An earlier standing order states that 'an election shall be held when a vacancy occurs'. This would give the Left ammunition to attack the NEC if it tried to postpone an election until the autumn. On the other hand, the requirement to hold an election is 'subject to' the passage quoted above. So the rules neither insist absolutely on a leadership election between annual conferences, nor lay down a timetable.

In practice, it would be virtually impossible to convene a special leadership election conference in less than two months. There would have to be time to allow for nominations, and for constituency parties and trade unions to consult their members and appoint delegates. If Foot were to resign next week, the NEC would come under great pressure to hold an election in early May – in time for a possible June election. But if Foot resigned instead in April – say, following a defeat at the Darlington by-election, which is potentially much more serious for Labour than Bermondsey – then it would be far easier for the NEC to prevent an early leadership election, on the grounds that a two-month contest could coincide with an early general election campaign.

In that event, Healey's position as leader would be effectively secure; moreover so would be the position of the new deputy leader, who would be chosen in the first instance by the shadow cabinet. (Under the bad old rules, all Labour MPs would have been able to vote for the new leader and his deputy.)

We can therefore see the glimmerings of a possibility of a move to replace Foot with Healey; but not yet. What is all but impossible is the prospect of James Callaghan returning. For that to happen there must either be an open contest for both leader and deputy leader – and it is idle to pretend that such contests would be anything but bitter; or, alternatively, the following sequence of events must take place: first, Healey resigns as deputy leader; second, the shadow cabinet appoints Callaghan as Foot's deputy; third, Foot resigns as leader; fourth, Callaghan succeeds him. Anyone who expects that to happen lives in a world of acute *Mail* fantasies.

The residual dream of those few right-wingers who both want Foot out and have digested the rules goes as follows: Labour loses both Bermondsey and Darlington. The opinion polls continue to show double-figure leads for the Tories. Left-of-centre allies of Foot in Parliament and the trade unions go to Foot in April and persuade him to step down. Healey takes over. The shadow cabinet appoints (say) Roy Hattersley or Peter Shore as Healey's deputy. The NEC decides not to hold an early leadership election. Thatcher dissolves Parliament. Labour wins power. The unions block a subsequent challenge to the new leadership. (When Labour is in power, elections for leader or deputy leader can only take place when a party conference decides on a card vote to have an election: hence the power of the unions to prevent a contest.) In due course Healey retires one spring, and Hattersley or Shore succeeds effortlessly to the party leadership, without an election.

Far-fetched? I think so, too. But if Labour loses both Bermondsey and Darlington, the unthinkable will start to be widely thought. And Fleet Street's parasites, damn them, might yet be vindicated. □

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RACISM

Conspiracies to assault

Amrit Wilson charts the alarming growth of racist violence in one London borough, and the readiness of police to prosecute black people who fight back, but not the aggressors, as conspirators

ON THE MORNING of 24 September 1981, a police helicopter began circling Newham, a borough in the East End of London. Local people thought little of this police surveillance and certainly did not connect it to the events of the previous week. With hindsight, the police appeared to have planned a more forceful intervention in the area than usual that day.

The Friday before, a gang of about 15 white youths with sticks had invaded the playground of Little Ilford School. The next Monday, 17 September, an Asian boy of 12 was so badly beaten up at morning break by white youths from outside the school that he had to be taken to hospital. Two days later, a gang of 60-70 skinheads with sticks and iron bars rampaged through the streets kicking and abusing black people before confronting Asian school children going home from football. (None of these incidents was reported in either the national or local press. Although the local paper, the *Newham Recorder*, does sometimes cover racial attacks, they are not presented as being of political significance – the ones in this particular week appeared too commonplace to be worth reporting as news.)

On Friday the 24th, on learning, they claim, of yet another planned attack on Little Ilford School, a group of Asian youths waited outside the school gates. No white gangs appeared and the Asians claim they decided to check the surrounding area to ensure the safety of the children returning home. At this point, a car drew up, carrying several white men. There was a fight in which one boy, Kalbir Singh Khala, was so badly injured that he had to be taken to hospital, and another, 19-year-old Inder Johal, lost his front teeth. A police van arrived and the Asians were arrested and taken to Forest Gate police station. It was only then, the youths say, that they realised the white men were plainclothes police officers.

The Asian youths were charged with offences ranging from threatening behaviour to inflicting actual bodily harm on police officers. They became known as the Newham 8 and have since been charged with conspiracy.

When it heard of the arrests, the Asian community felt both shock and disbelief. On 5 November, when the youths appeared before Newham magistrates' court, a school boycott called by their defence committee was supported, according to their estimate, by 80 per cent of the Asian children in some local schools. (Several teachers confirmed this figure.) More than 300 people supported the picket of the court, among them old people, housewives and children, the majority of whom had never been to a public meeting, let alone a picket, in their lives.

Despite the superficial similarity with last year's case of the 'Bradford 12' – when 12 Asian youths were acquitted of all charges, on the grounds they were exercising the basic right to self-defence – the one did not lead to the other. The Newham defendants, and most other Asian youth in Newham, had not even heard of the Bradford 12. Their action in defending their own community, according to the mother of one of them, came naturally out of their experiences of police inaction in the fact of racist attack. In Bradford, where the defendants were also charged with conspiracy, the police claimed at the trial that they had never heard of cases of racial attack. It was the decision of Newham police to charge the eight youths with 'conspiracy to assault persons unknown' that did most to increase fear and anger in the East End Asian community: not only were police unable or unwilling to protect them, but if they tried to defend themselves that same police force would bring serious criminal charges against them.

In Newham itself, the case comes after 20 years of racial attack and black people's attempts to resist, during which life has become increasingly intolerable for them. Inactivity by the police may be the most serious failure of the State to protect all its citizens equally; but the civic authorities have seemed powerless to protect all their residents from social and economic decay. Sprawling between Tower Hamlets and the still derelict dockland, Newham is one of the most deprived and run-down parts of the country. Unemployment in 1981 was a third higher than the national average. It has been made worse by the closure of Trebor's, the streamlining of Tate and Lyle and shutdown of various industrial sites. The perinatal mortality rate, at 15.5 deaths per 1,000 births, is above average. Over a tenth of households have no bath and/or no inside WC. (Newham Planning Department puts the figure much higher.) While 8.5 per cent of the borough's households are officially overcrowded, the proportion rises to over 50 per cent for black immigrant households. Poor housing is probably the single greatest source of discontent.

For the black 27 per cent of Newham's population, these measures of economic deprivation are usually more severe. They have, in addition, to cope with the long history of racist attacks and abuse – although East Londoners claim that racist violence is more severe in neighbouring areas like Tower Hamlets. Many families have been forced to move away from the area; others have developed illnesses characteristic of stress. In 1980, the Newham Monitoring Project was set up to monitor racist activity and the response of police and the local authority. In a report published last month they say the situation has been deteriorating, and that according to the police's own figures (inevitably an under-estimate as so many people don't report racist attacks) there were 57 racial attacks in Newham between May 1982 and November 1982. The Project itself deals with three or four serious cases a week, a 'tiny proportion' of those it believes to take place. Plaistow, in central Newham, had the highest percentage National Front vote in the country in the 1982 local elections.

THE FIRST RECORDED VICTIMS of racial attack in Newham in recent times are said to be two Bengali workers stabbed to death in 1965. It was in Newham that Kingsley Read made his notorious comment after the murder of an Asian in Southall: 'One down, a million to go.' In that case, the killer was sentenced to four years in prison. In April 1977, three brothers, the Virks, fought back against National Front attackers, were charged with assault and were sentenced to a total of 12 years in prison. In August 1980, Akhtar Ali Baig was killed in broad daylight on the busy high street. A young Asian woman, a school girl at the time, described it:

> He had come out of the Halifax Building Society just opposite East Ham tube station. Suddenly this gang appeared; he was stabbed in the heart, in a moment it was all over. It was terrible, unbelievable . . . his wife was in Pakistan at the time, she never recovered from the shock and though the attackers were caught they were not even charged with murder. That is the sort of thing which is in everyone's memory.

In fact, the Akhtar Ali Baig case was exceptional in that the assailants were brought to court. In many other cases, the police have refused to bring charges, even when the victims have identified their attackers. Black minicab driver Luke Fordjour was so badly beaten up by white youths in January 1982 that he lost the sight of one eye. He claims he was told by West Ham police that they had better things to do than investigate his case (see *NS* 23 September 1982). Police still took no

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Above: the Newham 8. Right, a young picket outside the magistrate's court

Andrew Ward/Report

action after Mr Fordjour picked out one of his assailants from an identity parade. Newham Monitoring Project has now lodged a complaint on his behalf.

Opposite the docks is Canning Town, once a thriving industrial area, now one of the poorest and bleakest parts of London. The bitter white families who live there see no future for themselves and provide easy recruits for fascist parties and propaganda. According to Unmesh Desai of the Newham Monitoring Project:

> Most black families in Canning Town have a history of racial harassment and people in the community believe that the Council to get over its housing obligations deliberately offers black families places in Canning Town, knowing that they are likely to refuse these places. A similar situation in Tower Hamlets is the subject of a GLC investigation.

Mrs G and her two young children were sent to live in Canning Town early in 1981. The harassment began almost as soon as they had moved in. Soon the children were unable to play outside and Mrs G gave up almost every outside activity. She made endless entreaties to the police; they replied that 'things like that always happen in Canning Town'. They refused to take a statement, though the Police Community Liaison Officer did promise to come and see her. She then heard nothing more from him for over three months. In October 1982 Mrs G began to suffer from hallucinations and soon after she was admitted to Goodmayes Mental Hospital. Her children were taken into care.

If Mrs G's case suggests that the council bears some responsibility for black families' experience of racial attack, the case of the S family spells it out. Their 15-year-old daughter kept a diary of events. There was something to record almost every day. They moved into their own house in Stratford in January 1982. Within days they had to board the windows up against attackers; eventually these boards were partially burnt in arson attacks. The family feared going to the police station because it meant crossing a neighbourhood of National Front supporters. Mrs S developed asthma and a heart condition.

On 26 January last year 40 white youths laid siege to the house for six hours. The police took no action. Soon after, a van dumped a load of horse dung on their door-step. The family took down the van's registration number. The police did nothing. On 1 February one of the children saw police officers standing outside, looking on while white youths kicked the front door in. The police did come to their home on 19 February – in order to search for ELWAR 'vigilantes'. ELWAR (East London Workers Against Racism) are a group which had tried to help the S family.

The family appealed to their MP, Arthur Lewis (who was sympathetic), to the local authority and even to the Prime Minister. The only action was the removal of game machines which were thought to attract white youth from round about. In fact, during the long months of harassment, the gangs of white youths had become well organised and had the support of adults and National Front sympathisers. By this time the S family children were often too frightened to go to school. When, on 4 April, Mrs S went to the corner shop to buy milk, she was surrounded and spat on by a gang of white boys. Her children rang the police, who did appear. But they then refused to charge any of the boys.

Instead, they advised the S family to take out a private prosecution. Despite the difficulties involved, the family followed their advice. The case was heard in July 1982, as a result of which both Mrs S and two white youths were bound over to keep the peace. The family are unable to move, because they cannot sell their house; nor can they rent other accommodation while they have to keep up the mortgage.

RACISM IN SCHOOLS meets with similar official indifference. Last November, the head teacher of Little Ilford School, Saul Ezra, told me: 'There is really no problem of racist violence in our school.' Since then (and the events surrounding the arrest of the Newham 8), racist attacks have continued – with two serious incidents last week. At Langdon School, where National Front leaflets were circulated last year, an Asian girl claimed: 'Teachers are not really interested. Every day we get pushed and spat upon in the corridors by white boys. When there is a fight about, it is usually the Asians who get punished.' An Asian boy, who left Eastlea school in Canning Town two years ago, said:

> What looked like whole families of skinheads would come in cars and wait outside the school – nearly everyday there would be a fight and some Asian would get beaten up, with support from the bigger brothers of the skinheads. The police would come and take names and addresses of the Asians. No one was ever caught. A few teachers were sympathetic, but they were afraid of gangs. They would be threatened 'We'll get you outside.'

Young Asians at Eastlea school say the violence has continued – but now Asians are fighting back. 'But because we are hitting back, the police who were never interested in what happened to us are now attacking *us*.' They find it very hard to concentrate on their school work in this atmosphere – and believe that, because they have traditionally done well academically, the violence is another way of 'putting them down'.

Two of the East End MPs, Ian Mikardo and Ron Leighton, sponsored the press conference this week on 'the climate of tension and fear in London's East End'. Ron Leighton has added his voice to the demand for changes in police practice, partly through his fear that unsatisfactory police performance 'could lead to minorities banding together to defend themselves. This could lead to gang warfare.' But Asian youths reject this interpretation. It is the police with whom they clash, in their efforts at self-defence – and then find themselves branded as criminals. The danger is that the relationship between the State and the black community is increasingly being determined by the activities of fascist groups and the police response to them. □

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HOUSING

Home fires keep burning

Nick Anning looks at the risk of fire in poor housing

OFTEN ONLY THE VERY worst house fires hit the news headlines – like the one in 1981 which devastated a complex of London bedsits in Clanricarde Gardens, Notting Hill, killing eight people. Yet every year scores of people die in fires who would have lived had they had proper housing.

This week, a Private Member's Bill with the rather unwieldy title 'Housing (Houses in Multiple Occupation) Bill' gets its second reading in the Commons. Sponsored by Jim Marshall, Labour MP for Leicester South, the Bill (which has cross-party support) is designed to tighten up the law covering safety and health standards in multi-occupied dwellings in England and Wales – Scotland and Northern Ireland being covered by separate housing legislation. Marshall's bill is the outcome of a year-long review of the law, in the aftermath of the Clanricarde Gardens fire, carried out by the Housing in Multiple Occupation Group.

There are 18 million dwellings in the UK. Approximately 120,000 of these – under 1 per cent of our total housing stock – are home to more than one household. Figures from the 1981 National Census show that in England and Wales alone almost 300,000 households live in multi-occupation. (The exact census total is 297,495, but the figures from the National Dwelling and Housing Survey 1982 suggest that this total could be an underestimate by as much as 30 per cent.) That, at a very conservative estimate, is a million or more people, or 2 per cent of the population, sharing a washing, cooking or toilet facility with another household in the same building.

According to Home Office statistics, this group faces a three times greater risk of death by fire than single households. CHAR, the national organisation for the single homeless, disputes the Home Office figures, arguing that their definitions of multiple occupation are too wide – they cover a total of eight million people and therefore spread the odds too thin. CHAR puts the risk factor three times higher.

Figures compiled by CHAR from the last census and from national housing surveys reveal that in Greater London 68 per cent of multi-occupied housing is unsatisfactory because of inadequate fire precautions, poor sanitary amenities, overcrowding or disrepair. The countrywide figure of 77 per cent is even higher.

Home Office records show that in 1981 – the most recent year for which figures are available – 278 people died and 2,471 were injured in fires in multi-occupied houses; in 1980 at least 268 died (figures for the period of the firemen's strike weren't collected); in 1979 the death total was 281. The average annual toll of fire deaths in singly-occupied dwellings during this period was 495 – a risk, says the Home Office, of one in 89,000.

The bottom end of the housing market carries the greatest danger. It's been estimated by the Institution of Environmental Health Officers that every night in the UK something like one million people find shelter in bedsits or hotels that may well be unsafe, overcrowded, unhealthy and generally unfit by legal definition.

SUCH ACCOMMODATION VARIES from large hostels and lodging houses to buildings containing flatlets, divided rooms or partitioned bedsits. Since they are, for the most part, densely occupied (and may often be converted in substandard fashion as landlords try to maximise profits from rent) these kinds of dwellings impose a much greater strain on their electrical, gas, drainage and plumbing facilities than single dwellings or purpose-built hostel and flat accommodation. Such places become deathtraps if a single paraffin stove is overturned.

Control and management orders (the existing local-authority legal remedies for substandard housing in multiple occupation) are rarely used. Even the new provisions of the Housing Act 1980, which were designed with the Clanricarde Gardens and Kilburn hostel fires in mind, apply only to buildings with a total floor area of more than 500 square metres – a figure which leaves many multi-occupied properties outside the scope of the law.

Aftermath of a bedsit-land fire – this man escaped with a broken ankle when he jumped from an upper floor during a blaze which destroyed No. 24 Inverness Terrace, London W2, on 9 January this year.

Chris Schwarz

At present, local authorities have a specific duty to inspect larger multi-occupied dwellings to check the fire escapes. If they are dissatisfied they can serve a notice compelling the owner to install adequate provision within 21 days. Local authorities also have a 'general duty' to inspect houses in their area for any statutory nuisance, but they have no specific duty to inspect multi-occupied houses. And even if they carry out an inspection which reveals insufficient fire precautions, they are not legally bound to act.

Only 44 of England's 366 housing authorities have a registration scheme for housing in multi-occupation in their area. 3,893 management orders and a mere 18 control orders were in force during 1981, the last annual figures available. And tenants themselves, often fearing harassment and victimisation, have only the uncertain choice of taking out a civil action against their local authority for breach of statutory duty, or having recourse to section 99 of the 1936 Public Health Act.

Yet the documented evidence from all parts of the country for the need to an end to merely discretionary powers is overwhelming. At the beginning of the year, Bromley Borough Council in London received a devastating report on its own homeless families unit, in John Baird House, Penge – a run-down block which was not purpose-built for such use. The councillor who prepared the report noted that fire precautions at the unit were adequate but added:

> I would question whether this authority, through its Environmental Health Department, would tolerate such a level of overcrowding (both in terms of persons sharing each room, and in the sharing of communal facilities) in the private sector . . .

The picture is much the same in other towns and cities. A report compiled recently by a CHAR group in Leeds concentrated on the Hyde Park, Chapeltown and Harehills district, where there is a high proportion of multi-occupied private-rental housing.

> Conditions in many of the rented houses are abysmal: repairs left for months if not years, severe damp, dangerous wiring and no fire precautions. The local Environmental Health Department seem powerless to enforce even minimum standards. . . .

In Oxford (see *NS* 28 Jan) a sudden spate of inspections of lodging houses by council officials only came after the joint DHSS-Thames Valley Police 'Operation Major' against claimants last September had drawn attention to a string of properties owned by two particular landlords.

CHAR RECENTLY RELEASED a detailed statistical breakdown of housing in

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multiple occupation in London. Not unexpectedly, the highest proportion of London's substandard multi-occupied dwellings are situated in constituencies in cash-starved inner-city boroughs. Lambeth Central (which includes Brixton) and Battersea South, both Labour strongholds, come bottom of the capital's league with 4,426 multi-occupied houses – just under 10 per cent of their total stock – rated so badly substandard that the local councils would be justified in slapping control orders on over 300 properties immediately.

But London's Tory heartlands have not escaped the problem. In Hornsey, which is the constituency of Hugh Rossi, Minister for Social Security, and has the city's highest total of households in shared accommodation, almost 2,000 of the properties are unsatisfactory, according to CHAR's figures. 167 of these would qualify for immediate control orders. And there is little regional variation in the households living in substandard, multi-occupied accommodation. Yorkshire and Humberside have the highest total in England and Wales, closely followed by the North, North-West and Midlands.

Jim Marshall's Bill is sixth on the list of Private Members' Bills and is due for debate on Friday, 25 February. If it became law, it would be the legal duty of any owner of a multi-occupied property – including a hostel – to ensure the health and safety of its occupants. Landlords would be required to register all such property with their local authority, who in turn would be obliged to inspect it, and then re-inspect every two years.

Local authorities would be required to enforce minimum standards of fire safety, repairs, overcrowding, amenities and management, with clear regulations for such standards laid down. Their powers of enforcement would be simple and quick and there is provision for heavy penalties on any landlord failing to comply. Any property which failed to reach the minimum standards could be closed down and the local authority would have the duty to rehouse all occupants in alternative accommodation.

If neither the owner nor the local authority took action, tenants of an unsatisfactory multi-occupied dwelling would have the right to go before a court to get their conditions improved.

It is thought that the government opposes the Bill, in private, on the grounds that it would mean an increase in local authority staffing levels to cope – and therefore an increase in public spending. But Conservatice MPs have not been given specific instructions to vote for, or against, the Bill.

Jim Marshall told the *NS* this week: 'There's a lot of support for the Bill on both sides of the house. London MPs in particular have admitted to me that they've been inundated with letters from people in their constituencies. And it is Labour party policy too. If the government were to oppose the Bill it's a further demonstration of their lack of concern for the underprivileged in our society.' □

IRELAND

Needle point debate

Mary Holland reports on the abortion referendum

DOES THE WORD 'UNBORN' qualify as a noun or an adjective in your dictionary? If it is only an adjective, can it have a right to life and, if so, at what stage should that right be attained? To put it another way, at what moment, precisely, does human life begin – at conception, at implantation of the fertilised ovum, or, much later, when the foetus becomes viable independent of the mother?

Such theological riddles continue to obsess some of the cleverest men in Ireland as the debate on the abortion referendum drags gracelessly on. Dr Garret Fitzgerald – having committed himself to hold a referendum on amending the Irish Constitution to include a guarantee of 'the right to life of the unborn' – is now to be seen wriggling this way and that as lawyers and doctors smother him with advice on the dangerous ambiguities that lurk in words like 'equal', 'right', 'mother' and 'unborn'.

The Attorney General has posed the alarming picture of a doctor torn between the 'equal right to life' of the mother and child. The Director of Public Prosecutions has said that the present law prohibiting abortions is absolutely clear – while the proposed amendment might make it more difficult to prosecute anyone for procuring one. This advice is academic. Abortions are not performed in Ireland, nor are people prosecuted for procuring them. Anyone who wants an abortion goes to Britain, a trip taken by an estimated 10,000 Irish women last year.

The fact that these legal luminaries have weighed in so late with their opinions on the text of an amendment that has been around since November has given rise to suspicions that Dr Fitzgerald is doing his best to dump the whole exercise. Not so, says the government. It just wants to be sure that the test put before the people is absolutely watertight and will allow for no exceptions which might allow abortion 'to creep in' to Ireland by the backdoor – i.e. through the courts or parliament.

Dr Fitzgerald is now under heavy pressure from both sides on the amendment. The government's latest public statement does tend to reflect the views of whichever side has been throwing its weight about most recently. Three of Labour's cabinet ministers, including the Party's leader and deputy premier, Dick Spring, have said they will vote against the enabling legislation for the referendum in the Dail. The liberal wing of Dr Fitzgerald's own Fine Gael party, silent for a very long time on the issue, is also showing signs of revolt. One of its women deputies has even said she will vote against the referendum – to date, the only woman in the Irish parliament to do so.

The anxieties derive in the main from what is now perceived to be the sectarian nature of the amendment. Contrary to a lot of people's expectations, all the Protestant churches have reiterated their opposition to it. In a powerful speech two weeks ago, the head of the Methodist Church in Ireland asked the Catholic hierarchy to use its influence to have the referendum called off and appealed to Ireland's political leaders not to 'define our Irishness by your moral code'. Such appeals are a cause of particular embarrassment to Dr Fitzgerald, who has repeatedly spoken of his desire to create a pluralist society in Ireland.

THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT that if the Irish premier could have one wish it would be to wake up and find that the constitutional amendment had gone away. His Coalition government already faces problems enough without it. The recent budget, which greatly increased taxes and cut back on unemployment benefits, has imposed severe strains on his relationship with the Labour Party. From the North, John Hume, leader of the embattled SDLP, has been knocking on his door and asking him to set up a National Council to consider the political failure of Ireland, something which he knows will offend Mrs Thatcher and which goes quite against his own policy of courting Unionist opinion in Northern Ireland.

Unfortunately for Dr Fitzgerald, the amendment won't go away; Charles Haughey will see to that. The Fianna Fail leader, fresh from his latest incredible victory over his critics, badly needs an issue around which to rally his party. The amendment is tailor-made for him. A number of senior people in Fianna Fail find the social and political implications of the referendum every bit as distasteful as their Fine Gael opposite numbers, but they have a lot more stomach for a dirty political fight. They believe that this is an issue that could split Fine Gael and they are prepared to try anything for that political prize.

All discussion of the issue – legal, medical, theological – begins and ends with the assumption of a consensus that abortion should never, ever, be allowed. No one challenges this, for fear of being branded 'abortionist'. In this debate, the voices of those most directly affected by the amendment – Irish women who have had abortions or may wish to do so in the future – have been almost entirely silent. A conservative estimate puts those who have been to Britain for abortions at 50,000, yet it is impossible for them to speak of their experiences. One pregnancy counsellor to whom I spoke said that already the emotion of the current debate has greatly increased the fear and guilt of those women who come to her for advice. She is in no doubt at all that that is precisely what those who have canvassed for the amendment hope to achieve. □

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CHILD CARE

Wards of Court

Howard Sharron reports on a 'legal kidnap' and explains the need for reforms in child-care legislation

A YOUNG COUPLE are appealing to the European Court in an attempt to retrieve their baby, who, they say, has been 'legally kidnapped' by a Midlands local authority. While suffering from severe post-natal depression, Mrs Wilson (not her real name) had started drinking heavily. On the advice of a social worker, she and her husband placed their 18-month-old son into voluntary care with the social service department. As the family also had financial difficulties, the couple considered temporary care to be in the child's best interests until they had resolved their problems.

When the mother was admitted to a local psychiatric hospital for treatment of her alcoholism, the two older children were also placed in voluntary care. These children were returned to their parents when Mrs Wilson's health improved; the youngest child was not. When the mother tried to keep this child at home one night – her legal right, as he was only in voluntary care – a social worker threatened to call the police if he was not returned to the foster parents immediately. Shortly after, the child was made the subject of a Section III order of the 1980 Children's Act, giving the local authority all parental rights and duties, and power to adopt him against the wishes of the natural parents.

When an order is made under this Section by a local Social Services Committee, parents have no right to put their case to councillors or to see any information presented against them by social workers. Once the measure has been agreed, the department has the right to refuse the parents all access to the child – which they did in the Wilsons' case. The grounds on which the social workers argued for the order was the extremely controversial one of the parents being 'of such habits and mode of life as to be unfit to have the care of the child'.

The Wilsons appealed to the Juvenile court to rescind the order, and won. But, as the overjoyed Wilsons left the court to pick up their son, they were informed by the local authority's solicitor that they still could not see the child because, anticipating that it might lose, the authority had made him a Ward of Court in another town. 'We had been told by our solicitor that the battle was not over after we won in the court because the council could still appeal, and I was ready for that,' said Mrs Wilson. 'When they told me he had been made a Ward of Court, and I still couldn't see him, I just went hysterical.'

No legal aid was given for Mr Wilson, a taxi-driver, to seek leave to appeal against the decision, so he represented himself at the Court of Appeal. He was granted the right to appeal, but it usually takes between six and nine months for a High Court to hear wardship cases – as local authorities well know – and during this time the child settles in with the foster parents, so that judges are usually obliged 'in the child's best interests' to keep it where it is, regardless of the rights and wrongs of the social worker's first actions. This is what happened in the Wilsons' case – with the result that they are unlikely ever to see their child again.

It emerged from the different court hearings that the social workers had broached the idea of possible adoption of the child to foster parents while the child was still in voluntary care, and while, the Wilsons say, they were being reassured by social workers that the family would shortly be reunited. The local authority admits that none of the children was ever physically harmed, and that the two older children were very anxious to return to their parents.

The use of wardship proceedings in this way is becoming increasingly common, says Rachel Hodgkin of the Children's Legal Centre:

> It is a cheap way for local authorities to keep children in care – it only costs £40 for an interim order to be made by a magistrate who does not need to hear the parents' case – and it effectively overturns a Juvenile Court's decision, should that go in favour of the parents. Local authorities use wardship deliberately because they know that time is on their side.
>
> The present situation is more scandalous because the High Court ruled, in a case concerning Liverpool Social Services, that *parents* cannot be awarded wardship, because the court has no jurisdiction over local authorities. The decision was widely regarded as a move to prevent the High Court being overwhelmed by wardship applications from parents fighting their local services departments.

Concern over the use of wardship proceedings to defy the Juvenile Court, and the whole question of social services assuming parental rights over children in voluntary care, has also been expressed by the National Council for One Parent Families. In its report 'Against Natural Justice', the Council investigated 40 cases where local authorities had appeared to manipulate the legal criteria on child care. In a majority of cases, parents were unclear as to what was happening and were not advised by social workers to see their solicitors. In some, parents were asked to sign a consent form agreeing to the Section III order while they were in no state to resist pressure from social workers. Having signed this form, parents have no right to object to the Juvenile Court.

Harry Fletcher, the former director of One Parent Families, said the Council had four cases on its books where parents had won their children back in the Juvenile Court only to have them taken away under a wardship order. In all the cases the original ground for the Section III order had been 'habits and mode of life'. He advised parents who did win in the Juvenile Court not to leave the courtroom until the children were physically handed over.

A PRIVATE MEMBER'S Bill – the Child Care Bill 1982 – was sponsored by the Liverpool Liberal MP, David Alton, and incorporated the reforms demanded by One Parent Families. It proposes that the power of local authorities to transfer parental rights should be removed and vested in the Juvenile Court. Both parents and child should be legally represented. The three-year rule – giving the council the right to assume parental rights if the child has been in care for three years – would be abolished. So would the criterion of 'habits and mode of life', which dates from nineteenth-century Poor

Montage by Peter Kennard.

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Laws and was originally introduced to prevent parents taking children out of the workhouse and into a life of crime. Today, it is one of the primary means whereby children are removed from their natural parents – not because the parents have harmed them in any way, but because, in the subjective opinion of social workers, they could be better brought up elsewhere.

While any sanctification of 'natural' motherhood or the nuclear family should be treated with utmost caution, there is clearly an urgent need for reform. The number of 'parental rights resolutions' increased from 24 per cent of children in voluntary care in 1969, to 41 per cent by 1980. This occurred when the number of children in care was steadily declining. The reasons for the increase are something of a mystery, but may stem from a fear on the part of social workers, induced by the constant barrage of 'child abuse' scandals in the press. Scandals like that involving Lucie Gates make social workers understandably cautious about returning children home – but this caution can increase their desire to place children with 'safe', usually more affluent families, especially as the demand for children to adopt has never been stronger.

The reforms incorporated in Alton's Bill would force local authorities to prove their grounds for wanting to assume parental rights. But they strike deep into the heart of the 'oppressive welfarism' that runs through British child care legislation – and are being vigorously opposed by the Association of Directors of Social Services, particularly its spokesman on this issue, Tom White, Director of Coventry Social Services. He argues that the decision should be left to professional social workers, who are better able to assess the interest of the child than the insensitive, adversarial system of the Juvenile Court.

TO THE DISMAY of the Directors, however, the British Association of Social Workers looks set to back the reforms. In a paper, yet to be fully endorsed, it argues that present legislation represents 'a betrayal of a fundamental principle of our society that civil rights can only be removed by order of a court'. It adds: 'The parent or child has few safeguards against irresponsible, prejudiced, incompetent, or misguided representations being made to the social services committee'.

This statement probably represents the feelings of many social workers who, in social service departments like Camden and Warwickshire, are backing greater safeguards for natural parents. While the Child Care Bill 1982, now being pursued by Lord Avebury in the Lords, may never see the light of day, the government has indicated that it has taken its proposed reforms seriously and wants to move some way to strengthening parental rights. The Law Society has also, in its evidence to the Select Committee on Child Care, indicated that the decision-making powers of social workers and local authorities in parental rights cases (and in limiting access for parents of children in care) should be removed and vested in specialist, or family courts. □

NATIONAL INSURANCE

Taxing sickness

Sick pay is to be cut by one fifth, reports Sarah Howard

THE GOVERNMENT IS SET to achieve one of the greatest single post-war cuts in living standards. There is an almost total lack of awareness that when, in April, statutory sick pay (SSP) replaces national insurance sickness benefit many people's incomes, when sick, will be reduced by almost a fifth.

Most employees currently receive two types of 'sickness' payment: national insurance sickness benefit, plus payments from an occupational sick-pay scheme (which takes into account the amount of the NI giro cheque in making wages up to some proportion, or all of their ordinary level). When SSP is introduced in April, NI sickness benefit may not be claimed for the first eight weeks of sickness in any tax year. Instead, the employer must pay SSP at one of three rates, and claim a refund of the same amount from the tax and NI contributions which are collected.

Since tax and NI are effectively levied upon NI contributions when they are initially collected, NI sickness benefit is free from tax and NI deductions whenever it is paid out. In defiance of this cardinal principle, the government (which was pledged to lighten the load of taxation) has made SSP, together with other short term benefits, liable to tax and NI deductions.

From the table, it will be seen that, for married people with the usual sort of occupational sick-pay scheme, the introduction of SSP will entail a straightforward cut in pay of £16 a week when they are sick. For them to maintain their present income, they will require an extra £25.22 a week in occupational sick pay from the employer.

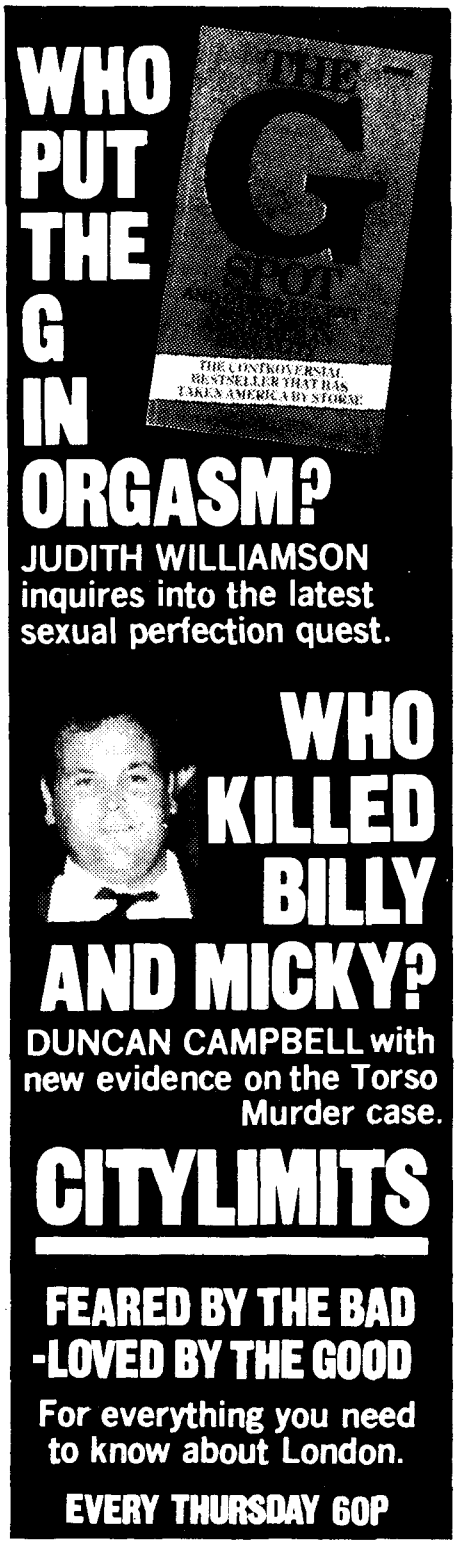
The introduction of SSP threatens those who are taxed as single people with a weekly cut in sickness pay of £9.75. To maintain their present position, they will need an increase of £16 a week from their employer.

For employees simply to maintain their existing living standards during sickness, it will be necessary for trade unions to negotiate a substantial increase in occupational sick pay schemes. The refunds which employers receive for SSP should go some way towards meeting the cost of these improvements. □

Married person earning £120 p.w.

At present	
Payment from occupational sick pay scheme	= Wages *less* NI Sickness Benefit = £120 – £41.05
Therefore what employer pays	= £78.95 gross
On which tax and NI due*	= £16.67
So what employee receives net	= £62.28
In addition to which what the employee has in NI sickness benefit	= £41.05
So total income from all sources when sick	= £103.33
After SSP	
Payment from occupational sick pay scheme	= Wages *less* NI Sickness Benefit = £120 – 0
Therefore what employer pays	= £120 gross
On which tax and NI due	= £32.67
So what employee receives net	= £87.33
So total income from all sources when sick	= £87.33

**Assuming one adult and two child dependants; and contracted-in.*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DIARY

Christopher Price

I missed the famous meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party last week which sparked all the rumours about a leadership crisis; I was next door, in Committee Room 11, trying to persuade Patrick Mayhew, the Home Office minister, to write into the Police and Criminal Justice Bill a few safeguards to prevent the police taking body samples from mentally retarded children without their parents' consent or presence. Though he wasn't having that, he did promise to consider putting something in the 'Code of Conduct' – which the police can happily contravene without committing a *criminal* offence. When safeguards for the public are suggested, 'the Code' is the standard reply – anything else would 'overload' the Bill; whereas if the police want some new power, they're given it in statutory form – and usually the excuse is Northern Ireland. Because some women, we are told, try to smuggle detonators into Long Kesh in their dutch caps, every innocent woman in Britain must be put in jeopardy of an 'intimate search'. Labour's front bench has not yet given a pledge to repeal the Act when next in power; unless it is repealed, the scales of justice will be absurdly tilted towards the police.

○

The PLP meeting I missed – so my comrades tell me – was not so much a moan about Michael Foot's leadership as a tentative attempt to stare the future in the face and wonder when the next Labour government might come. In retrospect, it was probably unwise of Dale Campbell-Savours to imagine that such a discussion was possible without instant media distortion. The weekly Thursday meeting of Labour MPs takes place in an unsatisfactory hinterland between privacy and openness. We don't actually allow the press in – though when there's a shouting match they can get a good idea of what's going on by just standing outside and listening. But when the meeting is over, all the lobby journalists troop in for a briefing from the Chairman. When Cledwyn Hughes had the job, he used to so beguile the hacks with his cryptic Celtic periphrasis, that they couldn't remember what he'd actually said when they finally emerged. Jack Dormand, our present chairman, is blunter and more honest – and the Fleet Street thirst for an anti-Labour story to ditch Tatchell did the rest.

○

The Boundary Commissioners have been eminently sensible in Lewisham, and made only minor adjustments which effectively prevent myself, Roland Moyle and John Silkin quarrelling about which constituency belongs to whom. But their national guidelines of staying within district and borough boundaries, keeping local communities intact and trying to match up the numbers in each constituency's electorate have all too often proved mutually incompatible. Especially in Wales, where the result, last week, was a disorderly row of points of order with which Bernard Weatherill, George Thomas's deputy and his putative successor as Speaker, simply failed to cope. Admittedly he had to contend with some skilled filibustering from experienced Welsh heavyweights – John Morris of Aberavon, who used to run Wales, Sam Silkin, who used to bowl rather good leg breaks for Glamorganshire and his kid brother John, who also hails from the Principality and is an honorary fellow of Cardiff University. (All this Celtic obstructiveness was too much for poor Bernard, who is only a humble tailor from Croydon and was without the support of his boss, who was away at the funeral of our Welsh colleague Michael Roberts.) So the mayhem went on and on, punctuated by bits and pieces of garbled, inaudible verbiage from Patrick Mayhew for the Home Office. The outcome of it all is that Bernard seems to have lost his chance of the Speakership, so there's no point in George Thomas resigning after all – as he was supposed to be going to. I still hope he stays put; if he does resign, it will be the first time since 1959 that the Speakership is up for grabs immediately after a general election. In a hung Parliament, it could prove a crucial bargaining counter – even a determinant of the outcome.

○

I agree with Tony Benn that it is a 'moral duty' to ensure a Tory defeat when the election finally comes; and I am strengthened in that sense of duty every time I even look at Norman Tebbit and the smooth facade with which he tries to cover his reactionary schemes – like the cosmetic of the 'Community Programme'. Norman has sent me a computerised letter, with his computerised signature on it, together with a disarming green pamphlet and an invitation to a party to celebrate this alibi for unemployment. I shall not be there. It would certainly be nice to clear up the derelict sites in our cities and I do not wish to detract from the experience of youngsters in Lewisham who have benefited from these schemes in the past. But there is a limit to the ability of the Manpower Services Commission to put sticking plaster over a crumbling economy; and the trade unions – who have some influence in that body – should not allow the acceptable face of Mr Tebbit to be projected in this manner; for it's against *them*, in the long run, that these schemes are directed.

○

What we should be fighting for is what the Prime Minister says she's in favour of – real jobs. A few more have appeared this winter, since the government has suddenly let up a little on local council spending – particularly on the roads. Suddenly the blackstuff is being raked out and laid all over London's roads – in response to government exhortations to spend up before 1 April to contain the dole queues before the election. It's all part of a pre-election gimmick and the best antidote to it that I've seen is a 'Blackstuff' poster, depicting Yosser Hughes, Liverpool Cathedral and a half-built brick wall, with 'Giz a Job' written on it. You can buy it (50p) from Merseyside Trade Union, Community and Unemployed Centre, Hardman Street, Liverpool. I don't know whether they get any money from the MSC, but the money from the posters will go a tiny way towards helping Liverpool's unemployed fight back and reminding folk of the magnificent BBC TV series, which I hope is repeated a second time – if possible just *before* the next election.

ROGER WODDIS

Family butchers

'This Government is determined to give individuals and their families more choice.' – Mrs Thatcher on the proposals of the Family Policy Group

Boys pick it up from their fathers
And gels at the knees of their mothers:
All individuals are equal,
But some are more equal than others.

Those most entitled to profit
From all that the Government offers
Deserve it by previously choosing
To top up the family coffers.

Enterprise, greed, self-promotion –
These are the virtues that count;
They that have not shall be given
A sermon from Ferdinand Mount.

Vouchers and health for the wealthy,
A kick at the grave of Nye Bevan,
A clear moral case against welfare –
Of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Truth can be altered by magic,
A wave of the wand – and hey, presto!
A manifestation of madness
Becomes the proclaimed manifesto.

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FOREIGN NEWS: US FOREIGN POLICY

Debacle over Libya

Having failed to destroy Qaddafi or dazzle the Israelis, Reagan's Administration is now torn by bitter recriminations, reports Claudia Wright

IN THE LONG HISTORY of US policy in the Middle East, this February will go down as one of the most lamentable episodes of bureaucratic infighting within the administration, and of abortive scheming by the Americans against both Arabs and Israelis.

Both the President and his National Security Advisers have made clowns of themselves. Last week's operation to 'rescue' Sudanese President Nimeiry from a 'Libyan plot' was the cover for a more elaborate American scheme intended to serve as warnings to Egypt and Israel, both of whom, in recent weeks, have been ignoring the Pentagon. The scheme included the possibility of US aid to an attempted coup inside Libya itself and an attack on the Libyan airforce. The problem for the Administration was that the cover story for the despatch of a US naval squadron and AWACS aircraft to Egypt was leaked before there was time to coordinate with the Egyptians or Sudanese, or to inform President Reagan himself.

The President learned too late what was happening, and was forced by journalists to discuss it publicly. At his press conference on 16 February, he accidentally told the truth, blowing the Pentagon's clumsy cover. That provoked a scrap between the White house and the Pentagon, each side telling the press a different version of the cover story, each contradicting the other, each claiming success for its own military masterstroke.

To understand what happened, it is necessary to retrace the recent course of US-Israeli relations. In Washington, one faction of freshly promoted generals and ambitious civilians has been wanting to seize the opportunity to establish genuine American intervention bases in the region for the first time in 30 years. This is opposed by another faction (of more conservative generals and the 'Arabists' at the State Department) who oppose Israeli expansionism and overt American interventionism for fear of undermining America's Arab friends – and of pitching them, or their successors, into the Soviet camp. This group wants to extract the marines from Lebanon, but not before their presence can be used to pull Lebanon free of Israeli or Syrian dominance. Both US factions have clashed with the Begin government's plans for continued Israeli subjugation of Lebanon.

In the negotiations on troop withdrawal from Lebanon, the Israelis have played every possible trick to discredit the two US negotiatiators, Morris Draper and Philip Habib, and to undercut their instructions from the State Department, provoking such a bad press that President Reagan's capacity to resist Prime Minister Begin's demands is undermined. (In his foreign policy speech last Tuesday Reagan stuck to his old script. Had the Libyan adventure ended with the demolition of Qaddafi, the offer of US guarantees of Israel's northern frontier would have been harder for the Israelis to refuse.)

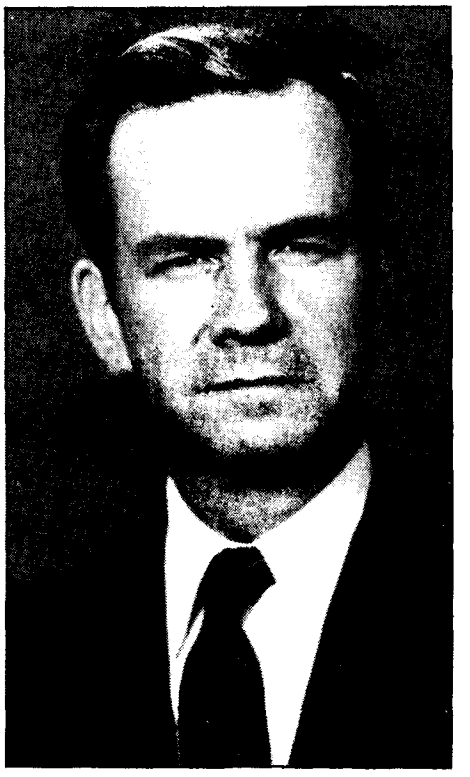
EVEN BEFORE THE OFFICIAL start of the Lebanon talks, the Administration had conceded most of Israel's demands – Israel would control Southern Lebanon directly (with overflight rights and ground surveillance), as well as indirectly through 'integration' of Major Haddad's Israeli-sponsored forces into the Lebanese national army. In everything but formal title, Israel would also get 'normalization' of relations with the government of Lebanese President Gemayel, allowing water diversion from Lebanon's river system and access to the Beirut market for Israeli exports.

But the US concessions didn't end the tussle between Washington and Jerusalem over whose 'client' Lebanon should remain. The Israelis judged – correctly – that the political situation in Washington permitted them to push the Administration harder. The US elections in November brought into Congress several new pro-Israel members, who now have seats on the House Foreign Affairs committee. In the Senate, too, the pro-Israel lobby is stronger than ever.

With this support, the Begin government has aimed to undermine resistance in the Administration to increased financial aid to Israel in 1984. It is also aiming at a potentially more lucrative source of revenue for the Israeli economy – US agreements on co-production of weapons and transfer of defence technology that would allow Israel's defence industries to expand their sales into American-controlled markets.

The Israelis want to block further movement on the Reagan plan for a freeze on new settlements on the West Bank and in Gaza and to delay talks on the future of the occupied territories until the presidential campaign starts in earnest later this year. They want to prevent a new sale of aircraft by the US to Jordan and more concessions to the PLO. Finally, they have been building support in Congress, the press and some factions of the Administration for a pre-emptive attack on Syria – ostensibly to do away with the latest Soviet-supplied SA5 anti-aircraft missile systems, but with the underlying objective of doing away with President Assad's regime.

The only vulnerable point that US officials could exploit, without triggering a backlash in Washington, was General Sharon and his involvement in the Sabra and Chatila massacres. For Sharon was making the Administration look foolish and out of control, damaging the President's political standing and creating a humiliation that no one in Washington could endure.



Colonel Robert McFarlane, adviser on presidential opportunities

On 10 February, three days after the release of the Kahan Commission Report, Pentagon correspondents were told that the Secretary of Defense, Mr Weinberger, had decided to reject an agreement with Israel for military intelligence-sharing. The reason was that he 'distrusted Israeli leaders who demanded too much'. Pentagon officials explained that Sharon had been trying to barter information on Soviet aircraft, radar and weapon systems, gained during the Lebanon war, in exchange for US defence technology developed in response to the information Israel would provide. Weinberger's hint was that if Sharon were dropped from the Begin cabinet, as the Kahan Report recommended, Israel could count on a much better deal from the US.

BUT SHARON ANTICIPATED the ploy. Last November, the Israelis had announced their willingness to share military intelligence with the US, and a Pentagon delegation initialled an agreement on 25 November. The intelligence-sharing began immediately. Then, in mid-December, after he had been snubbed by Administration officials during a US visit, Sharon leaked to the Israeli press that 'the Americans are suspending the signing of the agreement they themselves asked for'. He then confounded Washington with a press announcement that, in secret talks with the Lebanese, he had worked out an accord with President Gemayel that neither Draper nor

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Habib had been able to achieve in weeks of shuttling all over the Middle East.

By the time that Weinberger chose to make an issue of the information-sharing agreement, in order to seal Sharon's fate, the information had already been shared, and Sharon was able to retain his seat in the Israeli cabinet – as well as a degree of power in the ongoing Lebanese negotiations. He also managed to insult Weinberger personally with a series of contrived confrontations between Israeli troops and US marines in Beirut.

The embarrassments inflicted by Sharon added to the view among Pentagon staff officers and at the Central Command – the new name for the Rapid Deployment Force – that it was time for the US to show some military muscle of its own. The plans were the responsibility of the deputy national security adviser, Robert McFarlane, a former marine corps officer and author of a 1978 study of the presidential benefits of well-managed military interventions.

What was wanted was a show of the largest US military symbols in the region – an aircraft carrier and AWACS radar surveillance aircraft. But Sharon wasn't the only stumbling block to the Pentagon's image-boosting plan. The Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, was unwilling to allow the US to conduct high-visibility military operations in Egypt.

WITH WHITE HOUSE APPROVAL, the Pentagon decided to conduct its military demonstration in spite of Egyptian objections – as a warning that Egyptian resistance to US exercises was unacceptable. AWACS aircraft have been sent to Egypt twice before – the most recent occasion was immediately after Sadat's assassination in October 1981, when they were intended as a symbol of US protection for Sadat's successors. Before that, AWACS aircraft had been secretly despatched to Cairo in May 1981 to monitor Libyan air movements during a planned coup attempt against Qaddafi. The Libyans kept the coup attempt secret and, until Sadat's disclosure three months later, the Egyptians and the Americans did not reveal the AWACS mission.

The latest use of the AWACS leaked to one of the television networks almost as soon as the four aircraft and the 1,000 men in their ground crews arrived in Cairo. This forced Pentagon officials into hastily improvising details of Libyan threats to Egypt and the Sudan and urgent requests from Cairo and Khartoum for Washington's help. Official Egyptian denials and silence from the Sudanese took the shine off the image that the Pentagon had intended and the President's press conference made matters worse. Caught on the hop, Mr Reagan was forced into admitting the approximate truth – he hadn't ordered any movement of the aircraft carrier *USS Nimitz* to the Libyan coast; nor were the AWACS which had arrived in Egypt specifically aimed at a Libyan threat to the Sudan.

Next day, after the State Department and Pentagon had refused to answer questions on what was happening, a senior White House official, speaking anonymously, tried to defend the President and to salvage what remained of the Pentagon's credibility. The President, he said, isn't required to give specific movement orders for Sixth Fleet ships. 'The President didn't order (the *Nimitz's* movement).' Mr Reagan also had not specifically ordered the AWACS into Egypt, his spokesman claimed. He had authorized US-Egyptian air training exercises in only the most general terms. That, of course, undermined the Pentagon's objective to make a bold demonstration of US military power in the Middle East, as the carefully devised image of a masterstroke collapsed in recriminations.

Military crises, wrote Colonel McFarlane, the President's National Security adviser, in 1978, present 'an unusual opportunity' for a President 'to lead the policy process. He can define the crisis . . . the media, the Congress, and the public have relatively less effect because of their lack of information and the pace of events'. This time, events went too fast for the President. □

MIDDLE EAST

Arafat in Algiers

Henry Bagehot describes the PLO leader's skills

Algiers

IF YASSER ARAFAT wants to start a new career he should try writing cliff-hangers for television. For ten days over 300 members of the Palestine National Council and more than 4,000 observers and journalists were kept on tenterhooks in Algiers as his policies and even his leadership appeared to be in serious danger. Then, at the very last moment, the old conjuror produced out of the hat a resolution that simultaneously endorsed his policies and disarmed his opponents.

Perhaps the real secret was that Yasser Arafat had prepared the meeting carefully. At a pre-conference session, George Habash had agreed on the main lines of the policy resolution to be adopted; Naif Hawatmeh had been held up by (genuine) bad weather in Prague and said on arrival that he did not want to reopen matters decided by others. The other 'hawk' leaders from Saigon or the Popular Front General Command are regarded primarily as Syrian or Libyan puppets. Their not-so-veiled attacks on Arafat probably served to strengthen him.

By letting the hard-liners speak first, deliver almost invariably their eulogies of Soviet policy and get their ration of applause, Arafat prepared the ground perfectly. At the very end of the conference, his own supporters brought the delegates back to reality – the lack of any plausible military option and the rate of Israeli colonisation.

Arafat has few illusions about the possibilities of diplomatic success via Washington. As he put it in a vivid Arabic phrase, he and King Hussein agreed that they are 'chewing on pebbles'. His shrewdest move was to centre the final communique around the Brezhnev plan, which calls for an international conference and explicitly for the security of all states in the region including Israel. Arafat had already taken the bull by the horns in his closed session speech, when he referred to the Council's historic decision in 1974 to accept two states in Palestine. By bringing in the Brezhnev angle, Arafat ensured the support of all those who had applauded every reference to the Soviet Union.

There was more willingness to accept the idea of an eventual Palestinian-Jordanian confederation than of allowing King Hussein to negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians. There are, after all, almost infinite possible varieties of 'confederation'. Provided Palestinian national pride was satisfied so that a decision in favour of confederation was not imposed on them, this would be something they could swallow. The idea of a free hand for the King as negotiator, however, arouses deeper suspicion.

It was significant that by far the largest bloc of foreign delegates came from Egypt – far more than the PLO or the Algerians had expected. Both Khaled Moheddin and Ibrahim Shakry, who spoke on their behalf, made a clear distinction between the Sadat and Mubarak regimes – as did Palestinian speakers, though regretting that Egypt was still tied to Camp David and the Egyptian-Israeli treaty. The delegation, with its cohort of writers and actresses, had arrived in a chartered plane and it was no secret that they were there not just with Mubarak's permission but with his blessing.

Once again the Council posed the key question of American credibility. The US failed to stop the invasion of Lebanon; it failed to stop the siege of Beirut or the occupation of West Beirut or the massacres of Sabra and Chatila (despite formal promises by Habib to the PLO). Most significant of all it has failed to stop colonisation in the West Bank which makes nonsense of Reagan's own plan.

The PLO faces a hard task in the years ahead, quite apart from the problems caused by the folly of the Reagan Administration. It will have to cope with the attempts of Arab regimes to take too securely under their wing one or other component of the Resistance. It will have to adjust to a much smaller budget as some states feel the pinch of falling oil prices and others reserve their subsidies for favourite groups instead of the PLO as a whole. It will have to restore a communications and administrative system that has not yet recovered from its hasty departure from Beirut.

Yet somehow a friend of Palestine has to feel confident. There are so many factors in its favour. The courage of its troops has been matched by the diplomatic skill of its leadership and, for all the differences of opinion, there is an essential unity. Above all, perhaps, it will be the great absentees of the Algiers meeting who will turn the scales in the PLO's favour – the tenacious Arabs of the West Bank and Gaza. □

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USA

Icing the bomb

David Corn on the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign

New York

The Campaign opposes the deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe, which will introduce a new, qualitatively different, and greater danger of nuclear war in the European theater. In addition, the Campaign favors substantial reductions of Soviet intermediate-range missiles targeted on Europe.

SO DECLARED THE US Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign at its third annual convention, held earlier this month in St Louis, Missouri. With the adoption of this resolution, the 'freeze' campaign, for the first time, took the bold step of targeting specific weapon systems.

To date, the campaign has mainly concentrated on symbolic activities, such as the passage of a freeze resolution in Congress (an advisory measure that would not in itself stop a single weapon system) and a series of state-freeze referenda which call on President Reagan to negotiate with the Soviet Union a comprehensive and verifiable halt in the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons. Now, the campaign has announced that it will seek to prevent the deployment of new, destabilising nuclear weapons, especially those which will undermine the prospects for a US-Soviet freeze. On top of its new hit list are the cruise and Pershing II missiles.

The campaign has also decided to establish a Congressional lobbying effort, to cut off funds for the testing of new nuclear warheads and delivering systems on the condition that the Soviets halt the testing of similar weapons. To each bill authorising funds for the testing of new weapons, the freeze campaign will now try to attach an amendment freezing those funds for as long as the Soviets display restraint by not testing a comparable weapon. Under this policy, the Pentagon could not receive funds to test the submarine-launched Trident II missile until the Soviets tested their submarine-launched SSN20 missile. According to Randall Forsberg, the author of the original call for a freeze, this process 'is intended as a choke point, where we get to choke off not merely the testing but the production and deployment of these weapon systems, to challenge the Soviet Union, and to get our Congressmen on record'. Other US weapons affected by this strategy would include the MX missile, ground and submarine launched cruise missiles, and the B1 and Stealth bombers.

In addition, the campaign has resolved to make the 1984 presidential and Congressional elections a priority. 'We must insure we have a sympathetic government in 1984,' says Randy Kehler, national coordinator. 'This campaign is capable of making it absolutely clear that any candidate must absolutely support a freeze or face certain defeat.' Various electoral strategies have been proposed for 1984, including the direct endorsement of candidates, the election of freeze delegates to the presidential nominating conventions and the provision of volunteer support to pro-freeze candidates.

THE CAMPAIGN HAS ALSO supported a call for nationwide pro-freeze demonstrations, to be held on 7 and 8 October. These protests will be held, in part, as a sign of solidarity with the European peace community and its demonstrations planned for October. It has also endorsed the Martin Luther King Jr 20th Anniversary March on Washington DC, scheduled for 27 August, whose call is: 'Jobs, Peace and Freedom.' It criticises President Reagan's 1984 budget, noting the link between economic and military security. In addition, it has called for a task force to promote education on US nuclear weapons in the Pacific and has opposed 'US nuclear weapons collaboration with South Africa'.

'Many of these resolutions are signs of political sophistication,' says Mike Jendrzejczyk of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, one of the most prominent organisations in the US peace movement. 'People have accused the freeze of being too white and middle-class and not sensitive to coalition-building, the economy and racism. The strong endorsement of the King March and the economic resolution show this is not true.'

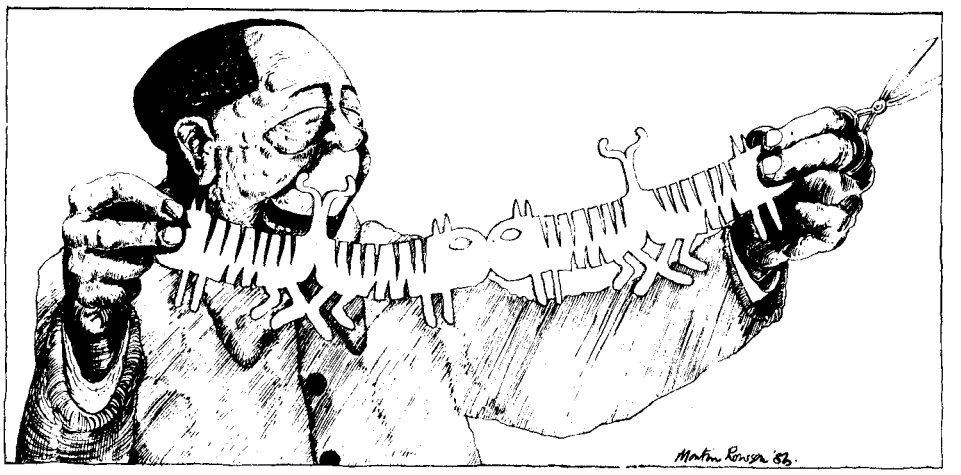
Though the freeze campaign has expanded its strategy on a variety of fronts, its next step is to ensure that the House of Representatives passes the freeze resolution. (Last August, the freeze measure lost by a 204-202 vote.) While it is expected that the House will pass the freeze when it comes up for a vote in mid-March, thousands of freeze activists are scheduled to converge on Washington DC, on 7 and 8 March, to lobby for the freeze. After the House vote, the campaign will try to gain a victory in the Republican-controlled Senate, where there is considerably more opposition to the freeze.

The Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign was officially launched two years ago at the campaign's first national conference, held at Georgetown University in Washington DC on 20 to 22 March 1981. Since then, the campaign has become one of the most significant components of the current US peace movement. At first, the campaign and its call for a freeze in the nuclear arms race received little notice. But it obtained national attention when, on 2 March 1982 – Vermont Town Meeting Day – 156 Vermont towns voted overwhelmingly in favour of a freeze. Since then, the freeze has been endorsed by 368 city and county councils, 444 New England Town Meetings (including Vermont), 17 state legislatures and 109 national organisations, including several major labour unions. Last autumn, freeze referenda were placed on the ballot in ten states, the District of Columbia, and 37 cities and counties across the United States. (With over one third of the US electorate having a chance to vote on the freeze, this was as near to a national referendum as the United States has ever come.) The freeze won in nearly every election – only the state of Arizona and three local areas defeated the measure. As the freeze campaign likes to note, the freeze referenda, with an overall total vote of 60 per cent, won with a larger margin than did Reagan in 1980.

NOW THE CAMPAIGN will attempt to test its political muscle. Opposition to the Euromissiles is one way in which it will do so. The point has been made, again and again, that 1983 is a critical year due to the scheduled deployment of the cruise and Pershing II missiles.

The campaign wants stronger links between the US and European peace movements – although there *are* differences in policy. For instance, the surest way for the freeze to guarantee its demise would be to follow END's lead in adopting a unilateral stance. All actions planned by the freeze campaign, Kehler has explained, are taken within the context of achieving a bilateral freeze. The freeze campaign has been forced to face increasingly hard questions. It has had to mature quickly. □

SCENES FROM THE LIVES OF THE GREAT SOCIALISTS: No.113 of the Series.
IN HIS DOTAGE, MAO ZEDUNG'S ATTITUDE TO REACTIONARIES SOFTENS.



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DISARMAMENT

Freeze in Geneva talks

W. Europeans have the greatest interest in taking Andropov seriously. Mary Kaldor explains why

VICE-PRESIDENT BUSH, on his trip to Europe earlier this month, said that the only objection raised against President Reagan's zero option was that the Russians do not like it. He is right. That is the only objection. All of us in the West, I imagine, would be delighted to ban all intermediate range land-based missiles from Europe – to stop the deployment of cruise and Pershing II and to remove all Soviet SS4s, SS5s and SS20s. The problem is that the Soviet government will not agree to the proposal, which essentially involves unilateral Soviet reductions only. And, therefore, no one believes that the Americans are serious about negotiations with the Soviet Union.

The Americans were *never* serious about the negotiations. In December 1979, they agreed that talks with the Russians would be one track of the 'dual-track' strategy. The other track was the deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe. They agreed to negotiate because this was the only way to make the decision to deploy cruise and Pershing II acceptable to European public opinion. In November 1981 they proposed the zero option as a negotiating position, knowing it was unacceptable to the USSR. So long as the Americans are not prepared to compromise, no agreement is possible in Geneva. And so, presumably they calculate, deployment will have to go ahead.

The Russians are hardly more serious, although their proposals have been somewhat better attuned to public opinion in the West. They have reiterated their support for the removal of all medium and short-range nuclear weapons in Europe. They have expressed support for the idea of nuclear-free zones in the Nordic countries and in the Balkans. In February 1982, they announced a unilateral freeze on further deployment of SS20s, although it is generally thought that deployment had been completed anyway. And they have put forward proposals for the talks on intermediate range nuclear weapons in Geneva; the most recent of these was put forward by Andropov last December.

Andropov proposed that the Soviet Union would reduce Soviet missiles in Europe to the number possessed by Britain and France. This would mean withdrawing the older SS4s and 5s, which are being phased out anyway, and, assuming the Soviet Union does not count planned increases in French and British missiles, reducing the number of SS20s in Europe from 243 to 162. Andropov also says that the medium-range, nuclear-capable aircraft stationed in Europe by the USSR and NATO countries should be reduced to equal levels on both sides. According to published Soviet figures, NATO has 183 of these.

So Andropov is offering to reduce or withdraw (it is not clear which) 81 missiles, representing 243 warheads, in exchange for a minimum Western reduction of 183 aircraft, representing several times that number of warheads, and the non-deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles. Not surprisingly, the offer is unacceptable to the United States. If the US is anxious to deploy cruise and Pershing II, then the Soviet Union is almost as anxious to retain its SS20s.

WHAT WE ARE WITNESSING is a poker game, with one propaganda move after another. From the point of view of disarmament, there is nothing inherently more or less desirable about the zero option or the various Soviet offers. Any reductions in nuclear weapons on whatever side, 'balanced' or not, are welcome, the more the better. All offers should be taken seriously. The poker players, however, are primarily interested in one-sided reductions (the other side's). The point of the moves is not so much to reach agreement but to improve the 'balance' in their favour and to win political support for their side.

The Andropov proposal does seem to have changed the climate of opinion regarding the Geneva talks. His proposal was welcomed enthusiastically by the liberal arms-control community – newspapers like the *Guardian*, centre politicians like Denis Healey. Right-wing European political leaders like West Germany's Chancellor Kohl, and even Mrs Thatcher, have said that the West should be 'flexible' about the zero option. So what makes Andropov's proposal *politically* new?

In Europe, 1983 is the year when cruise will be deployed. There are many politicians and political parties whose fortunes are tied to the negotiation track of the December 1979 decision. For them, the negotiations have to succeed in order not to deploy cruise and Pershing II missiles and to avoid a confrontation with the peace movement. They have, as it were, a vested interest in taking Andropov seriously.

Andropov made it clear, in a subsequent speech, that this is absolutely the last offer that the Soviet Union will make. It is rumoured that when the launchers for cruise missiles arrive in Greenham Common, probably in late spring, the Russians will break off negotiations. If the Andropov offer is taken seriously now, then centre politicians in Holland, Belgium, West Germany, and even Britain can oppose the deployment of cruise and Pershing II because of the Western failure to negotiate in earnest. In other words, they can avoid a confrontation and yet not identify with the peace movement. This could, in particular, help the German Social Democrats in the German general election next month.

If the negotiations fail, as seems likely, then cruise and Pershing II will probably not be deployed in West Germany, Holland, or Belgium and there will be pressure to increase the number of cruise missiles in Britain and Italy. The Soviet Union will phase out SS4s and 5s, as planned, and might also reduce or withdraw some SS20s as a gesture to West European opinion.

THE CONSEQUENCE, HOWEVER, of the shift in the position of European leaders could after all be agreement in Geneva. Paul Nitze and Yuli Kvitsinsky, the American and Soviet chief negotiators in Geneva, proposed a compromise last summer and their proposal was rejected both in Moscow and Washington. The only possible agreement would be along the lines that they proposed. The Soviet Union would withdraw the SS4s and 5s and some SS20s. The United States would not deploy Pershing II and would deploy a smaller number of cruise missiles in Britain and Italy only. In addition, there might be some agreement about medium-range, nuclear-capable aircraft.

In other words, an agreement in Geneva would yield much the same result as no agreement. Indeed, from the point of view of the peace movement, an agreement could be worse. It could legitimise the existing Euro-strategic 'balance' and appear to justify the multilateral approach to disarmament. An agreement in Geneva, for good or for ill, would establish a new political equilibrium between the superpowers.

Whatever happens, the peace movement will have to work harder, especially in Britain. The focus of the struggle against cruise missiles will shift to Britain and Italy. Proponents of the independent deterrent will be able to argue *against* unilateral reductions because British nuclear forces will have become 'bargaining chips' at the negotiating table. The peace movement will also have to give every support to those independent groups in the East, especially Hungary and East Germany, who oppose Warsaw Pact armament.

It would be surprising if we could put much faith in talks between the superpowers. Why should the two most heavily armed nations in the world be interested in disarmament? Andropov, after all, is the creature of the Soviet state system. The concern of Soviet and American leaders is arms control, not disarmament. And arms control means power play and crisis management. □

THIS ENGLAND

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☐ Must TV producers show sex with everything? I used to consider *Wildlife on One* suitable for family viewing but recent scenes of mating and giving birth have spoiled it. – Letter in *News of the World* (G. Moor)

☐ Mrs Thatcher said in the Commons last Tuesday that Mr MacGregor had done 'a superlative job' at the head of the state-owned steel industry. He has reduced the workforce by nearly half to 85,000 during his period of office. – *Sunday Telegraph* (J. J. Maling)

☐ British Rail is making fresh efforts to find a parcel, lost since 1946, somewhere between Leeds and Canterbury. – *Daily Telegraph* (James Scott)

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PACIFIC

Between the crocodiles

Pacific islanders, whose homeland is a favourite target for US missile practice, are demanding self-determination. Leonie Caldecott reports

Leonie Caldecott

Roman Bedor, campaigning for a nuclear free Pacific

STAMPING FROZEN FEET against an unyielding London pavement, as the temperature dropped below zero, the official representative to Europe of the 'Nuclear-Free Pacific' campaign must have thought more than once of home. To preserve that home, Roman Bedor has come all this way to a climate that is, both physically and politically, alien.

Bedor is a 33-year-old lawyer from the Micronesian Republic of Belau, a group of Pacific islands with a population of around 14,000, 500 miles or so east of the Philippines. He is touring Europe to try to explain the relevance of US military development in the Pacific to anti-nuclear disarmament movements here.

Belau (known to many in the West as Palau, from its Japanese pronunciation) has, since 1947, been part of the UN designated 'strategic' Trust Territory of Micronesia, administered by the US since the defeat of the Japanese in 1945. The trusteeship agreement grants the US power to use Belau and the other Micronesian islands for military activities, although it also demands that the US 'promote the development of the inhabitants of the trust territory towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate'.

Over the last 14 years, talks aimed at bringing the trusteeship to an end have been going on between US and Micronesian representatives. The aim has been to achieve a status of 'free association' between the two. Translated into the hard terms of superpower security requirements, this means expanded military use in return for financial aid.

A US government report, prepared for President Kennedy in 1963 by Anthony Solomon, chairman of a survey mission to Micronesia, (and later leaked to a student publication at the University of Hawaii), provides a graphic illustration of the Micronesian dilemma. 'Micronesia is not now United States territory; we wish it to become so,' said the Report. In order to accomplish this, it continued, the US 'must convince the United Nations and the Micronesians that a measure of self-government will be given'. Solomon therefore recommended that the US should sponsor visits by Micronesian leaders to the US, increase college scholarships and introduce American curriculum and patriotic rituals into the schools.

Roman Bedor is in many ways a product of these policies. After starting his college education in Hawaii in 1969, he studied law for three years in the US. On his return home, he worked for five years with the US-funded Micronesian legal service, before resigning to work with the growing anti-militarist movement in Belau.

Towards the end of the '70s, popular opposition succeeded in blocking a proposed $20 billion oil super-industrial port complex on the islands. Then, in 1979 and 1980, the people of Belau went to the polls three times in a prolonged battle over adopting a constitution containing clauses banning the entry, storage, or disposal of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons or waste. This, in the words of US ambassador to Micronesia Peter Rosenblatt, posed 'problems of the utmost gravity' for military use of the islands.

Many Micronesians, though self-sufficient a generation or more ago, are now substantially dependent on US aid. In 36 years of trusteeship, the agreement on the part of the US to 'promote the economic advancement and self-sufficiency' of the Micronesian peoples has been somewhat loosely interpreted. Thus a desire to be left out of global military calculations is balanced in Belau by a nervousness, especially amongst government employees who still receive their salaries from the US, that intransigence might lead to being cut off by the US without a penny.

BUT ROMAN BEDOR FEELS the islanders could well take the risk of going it alone. 'Even now, very few people on the islands are entirely dependent on a cash economy,' he explains. 'Every family has access to land to grow their own food. Even nurses and office workers in the largest town, Koror, have links with the traditional family life outside the city. Our fishing is some of the best in the world, and the land is very fertile. If you pollute the waters, you are taking away our right leg. If you take over the land for military purposes, you take away our left leg. We don't wish to be a crippled people, dependent on imported food and aid. We have calculated that if we had total control of our own agriculture, fisheries and industries, we could raise at least twice as much as we currently receive from the US to fund our government.'

The literal translation of Belau is 'our land'. It is attitudes towards land which provide one of the keys to the anti-nuclear, anti-military movement in Belau. Another key, says Bedor, is the position of women in Belau society. 'Women are fully involved in all the decisions affecting us, especially over the use of land. It was the women who pressed so strongly for the anti-nuclear constitution, and who went out talking to people on a one-to-one basis before the referendum, winning a 92 per cent mandate for it.'

Another important key is the experience of the Belauans during the Second World War, when thousands of them died, caught in some of the fiercest fighting in the Pacific. One of the islands, Peleliu, was completely denuded of its vegetation, its beaches turned into a bloodbath as the Japanese and American forces struggled for control. 'No one has ever done a proper count of how many people we lost,' says Bedor, 'but every family lost at least one person. We have never forgotten it. So when we are told that the military will be here for our protection, we say we have no enemies. The Pacific islands have never gone to war with one another. And we have a saying: never get caught between two fighting crocodiles.'

Belau has been lucky in comparison with some of the Micronesian islands. In the Marshalls, where 66 atom and hydrogen bomb tests were conducted until the atmospheric test-ban in 1958, the Kwajalein atoll is still being used as a target practice for intercontinental missiles shot from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Since 1981, it has also become a cornerstone in the US anti-satellite detection system. Meanwhile, over 8,000 dispossessed Marshallese live on the 66-acre island of Ebeye, in crowded and insanitary conditions 'bordering on a patent violation of basic human rights', according to a US Congressional

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report. Attempts to reoccupy their own islands last year, whilst temporarily halting the missile tests, ended in failure.

ROMAN BEDOR DESCRIBES Ebeye as 'the worst slum I have ever seen'. He also talks with visible emotion of the health effects experienced by his Pacific neighbours, three decades after the bomb tests. 'Women give birth to deformed babies. Sometimes they do not know whether to call them human or not . . . they are like jelly fish. The medical people seem to believe that the US is innocent until proved guilty. All I know is that we did not have these problems before. When you have been used as guinea-pigs, you don't need scientists to debate the facts. You simply see that your people are dying.'

On 1 March, 29 years after the first hydrogen bomb test at Bikini, Roman Bedor hopes to present a petition he launched in September 1981, and which now has signatories from over 80 countries, to another nuclear transgressor – the French government. The French are still conducting weapons tests – albeit underground – in the Moruroa atoll in Polynesia. In the course of up to 90 tests, the atoll is reported to have sunk 1.5 metres into the ocean and to have developed cracks which are leaking radioactive products. The Paris protest will be the culmination of what has been a gruelling European tour, in which Bedor has tried to broaden the outlook of an anti-nuclear and disarmament movement that is still very Euro-centric.

While he has been away, his fellow citizens in Belau went to the polls once more, to vote on the long-awaited Compact of Free Association with the US. A section of the compact dealing with the use of one-third of the land for military purposes was voted on separately from the rest, and failed to gain the 75 per cent mandate required under the terms of the Belauan constitution. Other aspects of the compact were approved by the electorate. Yet the US is hardly likely to cease making the change in status dependent on the acceptance of its own military activities in the islands. It's hard to see how the stalemate can be resolved.

When I caught up with Roman Bedor on that icy London morning last week, he was tackling yet another aspect of the campaign to rid his corner of the world of the nuclear shadow: plans by the Japanese to dump nuclear waste in the Pacific Ocean. As he and various members of Greenpeace registered their opposition to this outside the London Dumping Convention, even the latest victory in his home country failed to dispel his evident weariness.

'We have been to the polls four times on this one issue now. How many more times do we have to make our will known before it is accepted? It is the US which taught us the principles of democratic self-government, and now they want to ignore the result. Someone I met in Europe asked me why we didn't turn to the Soviet Union. I explained that we didn't want to be under the wing of either of the super-powers. We have been colonised for nearly four hundred years now. We're not about to start again.' □

LETTERS

CND's first 25 years . . .

Nicolas Walter, London N1

The article by John Minnion on the first 25 years of CND (*NS* 18 Feb) suffers from the same historical defects as *The CND Story*, edited by John Minnion and Philip Bolsover – and reviewed by M. H. Ryle (*NS* 18 Feb). A general defect is the confusion between the specific Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, which indeed began 25 years ago, and the wider nuclear disarmament movement, which began 40 years ago, which was already substantial and significant when CND was formed, and which involved many individuals, organisations and activities outside CND. A particular defect is the interpretation of the radical wing as being somehow marginal and even inimical to the movement as a whole.

These defects have unfortunate consequences both in the article and in the book. There is the uneasy treatment of such organisations as the Direct Action Committee and the Committee of 100 – no reference to the former in the article and no essay on the latter in the book (despite the ironic inclusion on the book's title-page of photographs of the first Aldermaston march organised by the former and the first sit-down organised by the latter). There is the apparent refusal to recognise the relevance of the libertarian movement, which so much stimulated and was so much stimulated by the radical wing of the nuclear disarmament movement – yet which isn't mentioned in the article and is scarcely mentioned in the book. And there is the curious failure to understand that the great change in attitudes to direct action and civil disobedience in the new movement results from the initial adoption of such methods by the radical wing of the old movement and their later application to so many other issues – and their continuing development by the radical peace movement ever since.

Perhaps the main historical lesson of the past 25 years is that CND has at last learnt to follow rather than to lead the movement. But this is precisely the lesson which is ignored not just by John Minnion but also by Peter Kellner and by your editorial article in the same issue!

. . . and beyond

Keith Lomax, Leeds, Yorks.

In your editorial 'CND's next 25 years' (*NS* 18 Feb) you see the future in terms of established political organisations, and the Labour Party in particular, stepping in as the spontaneous mass movement loses impetus. 'While mass political movements of the CND kind are powerful, they are also inherently unstable,' you say, and recognise their ability to 'cut through the restraining ghettoes of politics'. Support for them 'offers the prospect of fundamental change in the nature of society and politics, a prospect lacking from conventional party manifestoes,' you note, but see such organisations as CND as unstable because they are based on 'a precarious "spirit of the age".'

Yet the established political parties are stable. 'Their structures are designed for the long haul,' you say.

Quite so, the political parties are structured to endure a never-ending haul; one which, from experience so far, ensures that power stays firmly entrenched in the existing structures of the nation state with war as its raison d'etre.

Women and men are taking action independently to pursue liberation from war, from wage slavery, from oppression by gender or style of sexual pleasure, from racial discrimination and so on because there is little evidence that political parties manoeuvring in Parliament will help them. There is, however, a real danger that this movement will be absorbed by political parties.

To suggest, as you do, that 'the responsibility now rests on them (the parties) to initiate and lead political campaigns' seems to me to be upside down. The responsibility is indeed huge, but it rests with the people in the Peace Movement to ensure that the initiative is *not* taken away by the Labour Party or any other party.

If the Labour Party do come to power and get rid of nuclear weapons then that's a step forward, but the Movement should not give them one inch for manoeuvre, not one second for negotiating compromises and they should certainly not be allowed to take the initiative and lead. Our future is far too important for that.

Dirty jokes

Claire Wintram, Leicester

I find it impossible to accept Ms Smith's lighthearted attitude to pornography ('the ordinary adult ecstasy sort that is –') (*NS* 18 Feb).

The fact that her own childhood was free of the sexual inhibitions and distortions that are the norm for so many does nothing at all to diminish the sheer nastiness and mercenariness of the pornography industry. Even if Ms Smith chooses not to place it in the hierarchy of economic profit and oppression, how can she dismiss such terms as 'torrid rape and humiliation'? Taking out direct references to sex and rape is a disingenuous attempt to rationalise and justify exploitation – of women *and* men – in its extreme form.

It is saddening to read such a misguided view in a journal which so recently published Jon Cook's article 'Sex and socialism' (*NS* 7 Jan).

Masking the meaning?

Alex Mendoza, Hatfield, Herts.

I admit to a non-literary upbringing, which may account for my initial reaction to Paul Jorion's review of the Levi-Strauss volume, *The Way of the Masks;* it was to check that the issue of the *New Statesman* in which it appeared was dated 18 February and not 1 April.

Who, I wondered, would pay £15 for an exposition which drew general cultural and moral conclusions from a study of three obscure North American Indian masks? Fascinated more by the price of the book than its subject, I struggled through the first column but was halted (at least for the time being) by the following formidable sentence and a half: 'The reader of Mythologiques – in all likelihood a professional social anthopologist – may have been under the impression that the gradual methodological sophistication in the exposition demanded increasing faith in the validity of the intellectual venture. This is much less so here where methodology remains strictly under control, being restricted to the canonical inversion of universal binary oppositions . . .'

If you, or the reviewer, would be kind enough to explain what this extract means, I promise to persevere with the next three columns.

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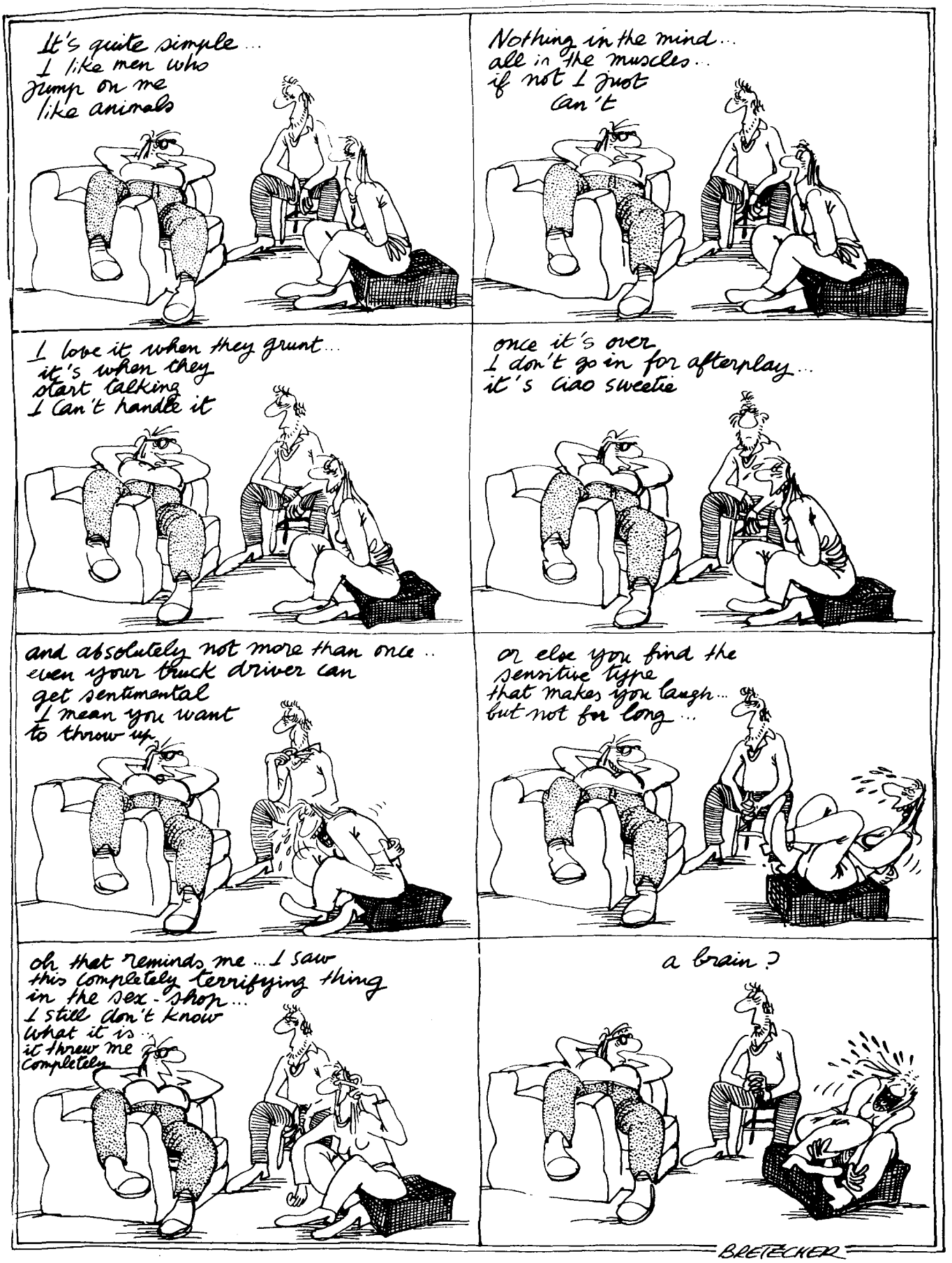
BRETECHER

ROMANTICA


It's quite simple... I like men who jump on me like animals
Nothing in the mind... all in the muscles... if not I just can't
I love it when they grunt... it's when they start talking I can't handle it
once it's over I don't go in for afterplay... it's ciao sweetie
and absolutely not more than once.. even your truck driver can get sentimental I mean you want to throw up
or else you find the sensitive type that makes you laugh... but not for long...
oh that reminds me... I saw this completely terrifying thing in the sex-shop... I still don't know what it is... it threw me completely
a brain?
BRETECHER

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Terence Ranger

At Rhodesia's deathbed

Under the Skin: The Death of White Rhodesia
DAVID CAUTE *Allen Lane* £14.95

The publishers of this brilliant book tell us that it combines 'a historian's power of analysis with a journalist's eye-witness reporting of events and a novelist's sense of detail'. Of this trinity of virtues analysis is much the least evident. Caute's method of documenting the last days of white Rhodesia is impressionistic, immediate. He reports from within each moment, recording the actions and opinions of people who do not know what the outcome of events is going to be. He does not often make comments that are wise after these events; frequently he makes no comment at all. He matches his reports of white views about black politics with his own much more perceptive and informed contemporary accounts of what was going on in the African rural areas. The reader is largely left to draw the conclusions and this is easy enough to do. We can see for ourselves how ignorant the whites are about the Africans they rule; how fatuous and nasty their statements so often are; *we* know how the whole business turned out. We hardly need Caute to spell out for us the outlines of the skull beneath the Rhodesian skin.

Caute sets out his purpose early in the book in a passage which repudiates macro-analysis:

> Any white who bought a ranch in Matabeleland during the next eighty odd years (after the confiscations of the 1890s) merely came late to the game of pillage. But is not all property theft, as Proudhon claimed? Is not all economic and political power originally rooted in conquest . . .? Had not the Ndebeles themselves invaded the area round Bulawayo . . .?
>
> The objection is not without validity. But what is the reach of this narrative? Not, surely, to prove that white Rhodesians, whether Pioneers or followers of Ian Smith, are uniquely rapacious, exploitative and imperialistic. Our subject is, in fact, a collective state of mind; more particularly the extraordinary mental manoeuvres by which pillage is termed responsible government, repression becomes law and order, usurpation is called authority, violence is lauded as restraint; the peculiar indignation, the outrage, the sense of ingratitude, experienced by the conquerors when the dispossessed natives attempt to recover by force what was taken so recently from them by force. Our subject is the myths, evasions, legends, reifications and strategies of false consciousness; the bones, nerves and flesh of an ideology.

White Rhodesians turned out to be the ideal subjects for such a study. Their suspicion of overseas journalists was overcome by the sense of solidarity with a fellow white. Unaware of Caute's concealed miniature tape recorder, they expanded before this irresistibly attentive listener with a kind of corrupt innocence. The only time in the book Caute meets somebody who knows what he really is it turns out to be Dr Sidney Sekeremayi, campaigning in Wedza for ZANU/PF in the 1980 elections. Pressed on his party's commitment to Marxism, Sekeremayi retorted 'to my surprise, that his regular reading of the *New Statesman* had not led him to suspect that I was any kind of Marxist either'. None of the white farmers or soldiers or suburban wives interviewed by Caute possessed this kind of knowledge.

As a result they parade themselves before us, their very intonations caught by Caute's ear or his tape-recorder. About one suburban woman Caute writes:

> Sheila is impossible to parody. For decades novelists have been fascinated by memsahibs, but the memsahibs and their daughters don't seem to read the novels and their performance remains unadulterated by a modicum of self awareness.

He might have written this about virtually the whole of white Rhodesia, cut off as it was from the experience and consciousness of Europe. Caute catches perfectly the mixture of discipline and horseplay, hospitality and violence, fine bodies and stunted minds which made up white Rhodesian 'culture'.

And yet Caute does not merely set up these Rhodesians for mockery. He shows them as people with qualities which in other contexts could be admirable. We see the world through their eyes and sometimes the view has a disturbing plausibility. Nor does Caute admire all the critics and enemies of the settlers. He writes of Sister Janice McLaughlin, who was arrested and put on trial in August 1977, as 'a swinging revolutionary nun with the awful verve of a college cheerleader – Black Africa was her team'. Sister Janice's private diary was 'soggy with incriminating thoughts and gushing references to the "Boys".' His picture of Father Prosser Gifford of St Augustine's, who became so hated by the surrounding whites, is an affectionate account of a classic English eccentric. Only Garfield Todd and his daughter Judy emerge as fully impressive and admirable in their steadfast integrity.

THIS approach yields many dividends. It is useful to have so faithful a picture of Rhodesian whites before they vanish into obscurity or demonology. It is useful to have so complete a picture of the dilemma of the missionaries; of the awful complexities and ambiguities of the war for African peasant farmers. At a moment when there is a danger of a literature glorifying white courage being replaced by a literature glorifying black heroism, it is useful to be given so clear-eyed a view of the crimes and follies which disfigured the guerrilla movements. Caute shows why rural youth joined the guerrillas and why rural people supported

White Rhodesian memsahibs failing to recognise the inevitable

Camera Press

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them and he shows that their eventual victory was in every sense necessary, but he does not imagine that a guerrilla war can be a pretty business. And there *are* moments of penetrating analysis. I found very stimulating, for example, the following reflection on an interview with black trade unionists:

> For black Zimbabweans the countryside is the place for war, the town is the place for earning wages. There is no war in the town, yet the town sustains the war. The peasant is damned, without hope, therefore revolutionary, but the black worker has something, wants more, will compromise with white power. Yet this neat dichotomy ignores the vast interpretation [sic] of town and country, those overloaded buses groaning back and forth . . . the roofs loaded with bundles, boxes, bicycles . . . bombs, medicine for the 'boys', food and money for the 'boys', all by bus and lorry.

I myself have found the book very valuable for filling in dimensions which my own recent field research could not reach. I worked in Makoni district between Harare and Mutare; in 1980/81 and 1982 I was able to obtain a very great deal of information about the war from African peasant farmers in the district, but little or nothing from white farmers. In the north of the district most of them had abandoned their land for good; around Rusape, the district's centre, the still prosperous white farmers had withdrawn into their own rural world. Caute's book documents year by year what happened to the whites farming in the Makoni district, an area which he describes as the 'deadly triangle'. I have no doubt that the book will be as valuable a quarry for others.

And yet I am left with two criticisms. One relates to the decision to prescind from analysis. The books shows and tells, but it doesn't really explain. That is to say, it explains what white 'false consciousness' was like, but it doesn't really explain either how the Africans succeeded in overthrowing white political power or where lay the sources of white economic power. There is an implicit inevitability in the book – a sense that this sort of white society was bound to be overthrown by its black subjects – which counters a *historical* explanation. And this relates to my second criticism. Is white Rhodesia really dead? Of course it is in the full sense. But very many of the whites are still there and it seems likely to me that they will not be replaced as rapidly by expatriate 'experts' as has been the case elsewhere in Africa. Strong groupings of white farmers remain on the land and I am told that the farmers of Marondera district, for example, still live in the world of the white Rhodesia of the 1930s, let alone of the 1970s. At the moment the Zimbabwean Government is giving these farmers high support prices and allowing them to dominate the local government of the 'commercial' agricultural areas. In the cities the suburban and professional 'culture' of urban white Rhodesians seems capable of swallowing up many of the new African administrative class. Perhaps in ten years' time we shall get a study of the afterlife of white Rhodesia. Meanwhile we should be grateful to have a book as good as this one. □

BIOGRAPHY
Olga Semenova

Colouring

Krushchev
ROY MEDVEDEV *Blackwell*, £9.50

Krushchev is an interesting and ambiguous figure. He was part-hero, part-clown and, in part, simply one of Stalin's henchmen.

The legend of Krushchev as hero derives from his actions at the Twentieth Party Congress. His denunciation of Stalin's crimes was an act of great personal courage. He spoke out against the terror, partly to further his ambitions in the struggle for power, and partly because he genuinely felt that it was wrong. By doing so, he made the cleanest break that has yet been made in Soviet history and inaugurated a period in which some degree of concern was shown for the individual and some freedom of expression was permitted. In these few years the camps were opened and thousands rehabilitated, the liberal publicist Tvardovsky presided over *Novy mir*, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* was published by Solzhenitsyn, and more peaceful relations emerged with the West. It seemed, briefly, as though the Soviet Union might be evolving towards a democratic form of society.

But, Krushchev was also the bluff peasant grown powerful. He was coarse and arrogant, outspoken and impulsive and often behaved like a buffoon. He tarnished his international reputation by beating the table at the UN with his shoe and by irresponsible and provocative actions, such as installing Soviet missiles in Cuba. At home, he indulged in public shouting matches, initiated sweeping and ill-conceived economic and administrative schemes and attempted to create his own personality cult. This meant perhaps that he was more likeable than other Soviet leaders, but it also made him enemies. He failed to give the Soviet bureaucracy the stability it wanted after Stalin and he failed to make himself respected.

In addition, all Krushchev's measures of destalinisation were necessarily limited by his past as Krushchev the Stalinist. Krushchev was an admirer and faithful lieutenant of Stalin and shed copious tears at his funeral. He rose through the party bureaucracy during the purges. He enthusiastically backed the trials of the Old Bolsheviks and referred to Stalin as, 'our hope; our desire; the light of advanced and progressive humanity; the greatest of all men!' In 1938 he was appointed First Secretary of the Ukraine, where he continued the purges to such great effect that, by the end of the year, only three of the original 166 members of the party committee were left.

Roy Medvedev's attitude to Krushchev is coloured by his particular view of Soviet politics. Medvedev has struggled for 20 years for the attainment of the ideal of peaceful reform of the Soviet system. His continuing efforts have led to his current prosecution for 'slandering the Soviet state'. Medvedev sees Krushchev as the embodiment of his ideal, Krushchev's exposure of Stalin as proof that the impetus to reform can come from within the regime. He thus naturally portrays Krushchev as a hero and plays down the more unpleasant aspects of his character and career. Medvedev's biography isn't quite a eulogy and none of the facts he cites are actually wrong, but the impression he conveys is misleading. ➤

The Soviet Union and the Arms Race
David Holloway
This important book sheds new light on three aspects of Soviet military power: The role of the military in the formation of the Soviet state, Soviet views about the uses of military power in the nuclear age, and the economic and political institutions that sustain the Soviet military effort. **£7.95**

A History of European Socialism
Albert S. Lindemann
This authoritative study of European socialism examines the relationship between ideology, institutions, and the working masses in order to place the evolution of socialism in a broad context. **£15.00**

The Political Economy of Growth
edited by Dennis C. Mueller
The essays in this unusual volume centre largely on an introductory essay by Mancur Olson setting forth the thesis developed more fully in his book, *The Rise and Decline of Nations*. **Forthcoming £19.50**

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Medvedev also fails to discuss Krushchev as a person. We are told nothing about his private affairs, given no explanation of his general outlook or the underlying reasons for his behaviour. Instead, we are presented with a dry collection of facts about the particular events of Soviet history with which Krushchev was involved. This is a great pity, because Krushchev had such an interesting personality. It is the fact that he was such a character, as much as anything else, that makes the period he dominated so different from Soviet history before and afterwards, a bright interlude dividing the black period of Stalin from the grey years of Brezhnev. □

POLITICS
Nicolas Walter

Doing without government

Community, Anarchy and Liberty
MICHAEL TAYLOR *Cambridge* £14 & £4.95
People Without Government
HAROLD BARCLAY *Kahn & Averill/Cienfuegos* £3.75

The familiar way of expounding a radical political ideology such as anarchism is through the prescriptive methods of propaganda, whether by word or deed, or of action, whether indirect or direct, and this has been the usual procedure of the classic anarchist writers and the historical anarchist movement. But there is also what may be called academic anarchism, which proceeds through the descriptive methods of examining how groups possibly could or actually do function according to anarchist principles, ciples, whether consciously or unconsciously, and of exploring how such behaviour may be generalised in society. This kind of approach has been taken by some anarchist writers, from Peter Kropotkin to Colin Ward, and may be seen in two recent books by academic writers.

Michael Taylor, a reader in government at Essex University, has already published *Anarchy and Cooperation* (1976), applying games theory to politics and arguing that group decisions are likely to be better without the institutionalised authority of government and with the voluntary cooperation of anarchy. The treatment was highly abstract and heavily technical, but still interesting. He has now produced **Community, Anarchy and Liberty**, which simplifies and amplifies his argument.

Taylor says that he has tried

> to discover whether anarchy – doing without the state – is viable and, if so, what sort of anarchy that would be and whether it was compatible with certain fundamental ideals of communitarian anarchists and other socialists, notably those of liberty and equality.

The book consists mainly of dense discussion of theoretical issues – especially the problems of reconciling liberty with community, equality and order – but it also contains some description of practical instances of 'anarchic communities' – informal groups and primitive societies which do seem to do without government. The result is intriguing and often impressive, though lay readers will be annoyed by the ritualistic references to and debates with other academic writers, and may be amused by the almost total omission of anarchist writers. Taylor concludes that 'anarchy is viable to the extent that relations between people are those which are characteristic of community' and that 'in a community, social order can be maintained without the state; so too can the approximate economic quality which community requires'. But he isn't very hopeful about the development of anarchic communities or about the maintenance of anarchy within or between them.

Harold Barclay, a lecturer in anthropology at Alberta University, has produced **People Without Government**, a more accessible treatment of the same subject (available only in paperback). He argues

> that anarchy is by no means unusual; that it is a perfectly common form of polity or political organisation. Not only is it common, but it is probably the oldest type of polity and one which has characterised most of human history.

After distinguishing between anarchism (the ideology of society without institutionalised authority) and anarchy (the mere absence of government), and between 'intentional' and 'unintentional' anarchies, he summarises the many known examples of anarchy – especially as recorded by anthropologists among hunter-gatherer, gardener, herder, and agricultural societies, but also in religious and utopian communities, in revolutionary collectives and cooperatives, and so on.

Barclay's discussion is more concrete and practical than Taylor's. He takes his examples on their own terms rather than as illustrations of a thesis, and he not only recognises but emphasises the non-anarchist elements of many anarchies – the prevalence of patriarchy and the tyranny of conformity in most primitive societies, the instability and ambiguity of most libertarian experiments. He concludes that

> the kind of free society which might be more durable and resistant to corruption . . . would be one in which each person and group was involved in a complex web of mutual relations so that each bond within the web would act as a counter-balancing force to every other.

but that such anarchy is 'unlikely to be achieved' and that 'we are left with a politics of permanent protest'.

Both books dissent from traditional political science in taking seriously the viability of society without government. But both books conform with traditional political science in tending to consider static rather than dynamic models. It is surely relevant that, while most examples of primitive anarchy tend to be stable, most examples of modern anarchy have appeared in the unstable circumstances of religious reformation, social reform or political revolution; that most anarchist writers (and other socialists) have assumed that anarchism would be established only during or following revolutionary developments; and that most anarchists (and other libertarians) see a dialectical relationship between the experience of liberty and the withering away of the state. Here academic anarchism must get out of the study into the street.

I have two closing reflections. One is that both books are relatively short, contrary to normal academic practice, and that while this makes them more readable it also makes the supporting material rather thin. The other is that while Taylor's book, published by a leading university publisher, has been badly edited and is often unnecessarily obscure, Barclay's book, published by a small general publisher and a smaller anarchist publisher, has been excellently edited and despite beginning as a clumsy and confused manuscript now reads clearly and elegantly. □

John Levett

Radiotherapy

A soft and endless loop
Of fifties music plays
Above our random group;
Well used to these delays
The tropical, lit fish,
Absorbed and pliant, move.
The name-tag on your wrist
Has isolated love.
Distraction comes too soon,
They draw lines on your breast,
Or where it once had been,
And usher you, poor guest,
On to the corridor
Past cupboards, telephones,
Just one of many more
In functional white gowns;
Yet once inside that room,
Laid out, marked up, you are
Alone, a long way from
All help and all desire.
Nowadays, thank God, the staff
Have microphones, TVs.
They chat to you and laugh.
Life's little ironies.

Among this week's contributors:

TERENCE RANGER, Professor of Modern History at Manchester, taught at the University College of Rhodesia from 1952 until deported in 1963. He is the author of *Revolt in Southern Rhodesia 1896-7* and *The African Voice in Southern Rhodesia*.

SARA MAITLAND's *A Map of the New Country: Women and Christianity* has just been published by Routledge.

JAMES BENTLEY's books include *Between Marx and Christ* (NLB).

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WOMEN
Sara Maitland

Man's eye view

A History of Women's Bodies
EDWARD SHORTER *Allen Lane* £14.95

Edward Shorter seems a funny sort of man to me. I think he wants modern women to like men, or him at least, more than he feels we do. But to write 300 pages of detailed research into the stomach-turning agonies of gynaecological disorders is an odd way to go about persuading us.

His *History of Women's Bodies* is not what its title might suggest; it is a modern history of women's physical, and consequent psychological, sufferings during sex and childbirth. His thesis is approximately this: until the 19th century the results of intercourse and parturition were so horrific that women clung together in what he calls a 'culture of solace'. Then along came some nicer men, and freed women from this dreadful bondage. With new health and romantic hearth-sides women were able to set up the women's movement . . . so why are they so ungrateful now? These 'new men' (his inverted commas) have been 're-moulded by the modern family into affectionate husbands and quite unlike the contemptuous, brutal males, of the traditional home'. Dr Shorter concentrates, usefully I think, on the experience of peasant and working-class women, but his 'new men' seem something of a bourgeois fiction. Perhaps he should do some more research – in Battered Wives' Refuges, Rape Crisis Centres and Citizens' Advice Bureaux, where he might learn about contemporary brutality and contempt.

I am very dubious about his theory that there was no love or sexual pleasure in traditional homes. His belief that arranged marriages are naturally more miserable than romantic ones is dangerously insular; and folk literature gives the lie to his claim that women and men had neither affectual nor sexual hopes of each other.

Of course he is right to criticise some of the scholarship that has come from the feminist movement, particularly the myth that in the loving female hands of the mid-wife agrarian women had joyful and painless labours. His detailed evidence, especially about rickets and puerperal fever, is fascinating and demands incorporation into feminist thinking. But the social, or moral, conclusions he draws are provocative at best. His fixation on pathology, necessary to his thesis, is the principle problem: a social/medical history of women's bodies which ignores the experience of menstruation, menopause, motherhood, lesbianism, lactation and virginity is bound to go awry. Dr Shorter, for all his work and concern, still sees women's bodies solely in relation to men's sexuality. □

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Belly Dancing

WENDY BUONAVENTURA *Virago* £5.95

It may seen curious that Virago should bring out an illustrated history of belly dancing. Stranger still that the *New Statesman* should review it . . . But this simply indicates how western prejudice has degraded an art form which once celebrated the power and importance of the female role in society. Something which the author describes as 'a poem of creation', 'the first and most enduring dance of all' is now, sadly, relegated to sleazy nightclubs.

Belly dancing features in prehistoric paintings, and the technique of the dance was carried through India, Spain and the Middle East by nomadic gypsy tribes. To this day a tribe called the Ouled Nail travel through the Algerian Sahara, calling at each oasis to dance in the cafés and earn their living. The story of the dance is also the story of how women became devalued in society. As such it is of interest to feminist historians.

Initially belly dancing was a fertility rite, an imitation of the sex act – which was regarded as holy in primitive societies – to bring on pregnancy. In an age of goddess worship, and respect for women, the dance was a celebration of life, and of female power. With the change in attitude towards women's sexuality, brought about by the male-oriented religions of Judaism and Christianity, and with the rise of patrileny, the dance took on a negative aspect. It became the expression of women's 'darker seductive side', something to be feared, mistrusted and devalued.

Wendy Buonaventura is keen for the belly dance to be reassessed as the positive and therapeutic exercise it is. She explains how useful it can be physically during childbirth, and how, as an expression of emotion, it is every bit as communicative as words. Just as yoga and meditation have filtered through into our culture, belly dancing is now also making some impression. Since our attitude to the female body is generally very prim, it will take a long time for the sniggers to die down. At least this book makes a positive contribution to the countering of such ignorance and repression.

Barney Bardsley

Marxism and Christianity

DENYS TURNER *Blackwell* £17.50

Denys Turner has written this book to explore whether Christianity can incorporate, without loss of integrity, the Marxist account of religion as essentially ideological. Further, he asks, would Christianity then be left with any resources from which to construct an equally fundamental criticism of Marxist pretensions to morality?

He writes tentatively and well, enlivening severely philosophical discussions with entertaining illustrations. The Marxist concept of praxis is amplified by considering the differences between the words 'I love you' and a kiss between lovers. Ideology and contradiction are illustrated by a (no doubt hypothetical) university lecturer who says *in* his lecturing 'speak your own minds' and *by* his lecturing 'but by no means interrupt'. George Eliot's *Felix Holt, the Radical* is brilliantly used to elaborate Ernest Gellner's observation that a phrase such as 'your betters' is a conceptual device 'by which the privileged class of the society in question acquires some of the prestige of certain virtues respected in that society, without the inconvenience of needing to practise them.'

The author, who lectures in the philosophy of religion at Bristol University, discusses penetratingly not only Marx and Engels but also the English Levellers and Louis Althusser's 20th-century polemic against Christianity. He does not conceal his own moral and political judgments. He 'feels crushed between the moral cynicism of a Brezhnev and the moral hypocrisy of a Reagan'. He writes, baldly, of 'the problem the British have created in Northern Ireland'. He observes that capitalism manages to sustain its moral convictions (such as genuine equality before the law, adequate housing, food and clothing for everyone) only by 'not recognising the fact that it installs the very conditions under which those convictions are unrealisable'. And he is scathing about those Christians who, talking so readily and unproblematically about love, 'seem quite to have forgotten that Christianity, embodied in the life of its founder, came not so much with news about love, but rather about its price'.

James Bentley

Death Before Dishonour: The True Story of Fighting Mac

TREVOR ROYLE *Mainstream* £7.95

Born in a croft, Hector MacDonald enlisted as a private soldier in the Gordons in 1870. During the first Afghan War he was taken prisoner, but not before kicking in the stomach an assailant who had tried to seize him by the sporran. Twenty years later he again saw service on the veldt. In the years between he roamed across Egypt and the Sudan seeking whom he might devour – first under Baker who was rehabilitating himself after his conviction for indecently assaulting a young lady in a railway carriage, and then as one of the sexually enigmatic Kitchener's 'Band of Boys'. Decorated by, and wounded under, the Sirdar, his finest hour came when he pulled that indifferent tactician's chestnuts out of the fire at Omdurman.

Mr Royle's vivid account, with its description of the difficulties confronting a plebeian among patricians only nine years after the abolition of purchase, is much more than another spiffing yarn. What interests him is what interested Frank Richardson in his recently published *Mars and Venus*: the extent to which love affairs with danger may be a sublimation of socially unacceptable sexual preferences. Although MacDonald entered into some sort of rough and ready, and peculiarly Scottish, alliance with a girl 14 years his junior, they never set up house together. The arrangement eventually became 'a friendship licenced by the police' but not until four years after what might well have been the single tender passage between them had resulted in the birth of a child. Certainly a good deal of evidence accumulated that, when deprived of the stimulus of danger, his predilections were not for the opposite sex. He was accused of exposing himself to either four or 70 Cingalese boys – accounts vary – on one of those trains which seem to have brought out the worst in members of his profession. Threatened with court martial, he shot himself.

It is to the author's credit that he sympathetically describes, rather than incontinently condemns, those attitudes which brought about the destruction of an old warrior who was so much to the taste of his own generation that they could not bring themselves to believe that he was dead. Alas for romance. Mr Royle effectively demolishes the myth that he was metamorphosed into Von Mackensen.

Bruce Hepburn

The Businessman in American Literature

EMILY STIPES WATSON *University of Georgia* $16

This is not a book to bring sweetness and light to the *NS* reader for it overtly seeks a favourable image of the businessman in American fiction. That it does not find one until the 1940s supports its contention that business seldom found favour with the literature, or indeed the conscience, of America. The great period of lambasting, from the Civil War to the 1930s, is familiar; less expected is the ambiguity of figures of the earlier years like the Yankee Peddler and the Con Man.

These provide the backbone for a criticism in which much surfaces. Thus the inexperience of writers in business *per se* expands into Saul Bellow's 'we do not, we writers, represent mankind adequately'. Identifying one of these inadequate representations is clearly the author's argument, but she ranges through corporatism, consumerism and democracy. and, heavily loaded as is her theme, she is not predictable.

At the heart of the representation issue are the Pilgrim Fathers. She asks how men so devoutly communal, forswearing luxury and consumption, can give rise to the Peddler and Con Man, and why, in particular, Weber associates them with the private property and individualism that broke up their ideal. Yet she can also see consumerism as democracy and the Puritan ideal as an 'establishment' from which it is in nature, or American nature, to get free.

Her best service may be to suggest that we do not ask 'unusual' questions: about, for instance, what precise persons, or class of persons, set the quick change of capital flowing. While the challenge, and challenging, of her own tradition sometimes leaves her floundering, this is a book worth looking into.

Angela Harding

ILL SEEN ILL SAID

is one of Samuel Beckett's most evocative and ghostly texts, rich in language and its description of an old woman observing and observed. New in paperback (£2.95). Other Calder paperbacks are *Pelagie-la Charette* by Antonine Maillet, winner of the Prix Goncourt, a historical novel portraying the persecution of Canada's French speaking Acadians by the British in the 18th century and their struggle to survive and return (£4.95), *Lillelord*, Johan Borgen's masterly evocation of turn-of-the-century Oslo through the experiences of a spoilt but sinister little boy (£6.95), and *The Man Who Travelled on Motorways* by Trevor Hoyle, an unusual semi-surreallst novel that takes motorway travel as its theme (£3.95).

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Lorenzo da Ponte, was revolutionary, priest, poet, impressario, great lover, one of the most colourful figures of his age, who produced three masterful opera texts for Mozart in April Fitzlyon's fascinating biography, now in paper (£3.95). The fourth volume of John Atkins' *Sex in Literature* covers the 17th and 18th centuries, is fascinating to read and the essential source book for the erotic writing and preoccupations of the period (£12.95). Volume 3 *The Medieval Experience,* now in paperback (£6.95). South African poet Brtyen Brytenbach, now released from prison, has his selected poems in paper *Ih Africa Even the Flies are Happy* (£3.95).

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MEMOIRS
Bob Woffinden

Subversive

A Small Thing – Like an Earthquake
NED SHERRIN *Weidenfeld* £10.95

Last year the BBC transmitted a 20-year-old edition of *That Was The Week That Was*. Ned Sherrin, the programme's creator, producer and director, introduced it: 'It was 1962. The year of the Cuban missile crisis. You could go out with five pounds in your pocket, bribe two metropolitan policemen, and still come home with change.' Police corruption was topical, so that remark was deliberately sensitive. With one deft stroke, Sherrin had recreated the appeal of *TW3:* it lived dangerously, and cut deeper than anything presented previously (or, come to that, since) on television.

Doubtless time has embroidered our memories of it, but it did provide genuinely exhilarating entertainment. One of its great virtues, insufficiently appreciated perhaps, is that it instilled a fierce interest in politics in adolescents who, like myself, had not previously given the subject much thought. Television provides no comparable stimulus for today's teenagers.

Sherrin had previously worked on the seminal *Tonight* programme, where 'part of my job was to be aware of developments in the theatre and to make sure they were reported on or reflected in our nightly magazine'. This is a function which no TV producer today would be called upon to fulfil. In Sherrin's case, it was invaluable. Most of the bold decisions that were fundamental in shaping the unique character of *TW3* – to hire a band, to shoot it in front of an audience, with studio clutter serving as its own set-design, to experiment rather than not – were a by-product of his reconnaissance work in theatres and small clubs.

In his search for contributions, he cast a broad net, one result of which was that *TW3* became the first British TV programme with credits long enough to suit American television. He solicited support from the theatrical high and mighty – Noel Coward declined, Sybil Thorndyke accepted – as well as encouraging such diverse stripling talents as Gerald Kaufman and John Cleese.

Sherrin nursed the programme through its recurrent brushes with officialdom. His debonair appearance and conciliatory manner successfully cloaked his subversive designs ('subversive' in the sense of undermining the broadcasting etiquette of the day), though he was also grateful for the staunch support of Alasdair Milne (now the BBC's Director-General) and Donald Baverstock.

Finally, the BBC buckled, and used the transparently feeble excuse of a forthcoming general election to terminate *TW3* at the end of 1963. The kudos of the programme was such that it had to be replaced, and Sherrin produced the like-minded shows which succeeded it. *Not So Much a Programme – More a Way of Life* ran for three nights a week. The BBC found that too hot to handle too, so it was dropped, along with David Frost, who'd anchored Sherrin's shows since co-presenting the very first *TW3* pilot with Brian Redhead. *BBC-3,* with the officially-approved Robert Robinson, arrived instead.

Sherrin writes that, because of the change of presenter, 'the new show lacked some of the sense of danger, of balancing on a knife-edge, which Frost had brought'. The BBC thought it had shackled its wayward offspring, but *BBC-3* created the greatest furore of all. 'I don't see why,' Ken Tynan said very soberly one evening, 'people shouldn't be allowed to say "fuck" on television.' Rarely has an entire nation conversed about a single topic as animatedly as it did that next Monday morning. The BBC offered its apologies; the programme's ratings soared, but its days were numbered.

Just as the Beatles will never escape having been Beatles, so Sherrin will never escape *TW3 et al.* He acknowledges this in *A Small Thing,* by opening with a scene-setting essay on the early Sixties and chapters on his television work. A description of his adolescence in Somerset is placed at the end.

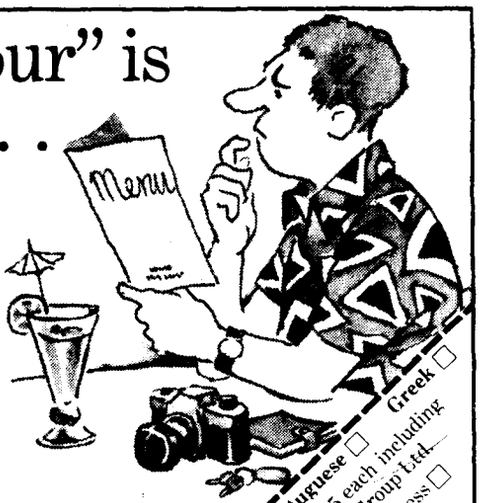
Since leaving the BBC, Sherrin has worked in the cinema, and has conceived a variety of musical works for the theatre. Nearly all were undertaken in collaboration with Caryl Brahms who, sadly, died after the book had gone to press. The chapters devoted to raising money in the film industry, and to staging shows in the non-subsidised theatre, are illuminating about the recent parlous history of those benighted forms of popular entertainment.

A Small Thing is written with wit and charm, and almost without rancour. Sherrin does not forbear to describe himself, albeit indirectly, as 'an archetypal acid gossip'. He drops names – Elizabeth Taylor, Judy Garland, Mick Jagger – with as much relish as he relates some lively anecdotes. There was, for example, a New York taxi-driver who misconstrued the Profumo scandal: 'I don't see why this Macmillan guy shouldn't sleep around. At his age, it's to his credit'; the actress Carol Lynley once described Lord Goodman as the only man ever to have been flattered by a Gerald Scarfe cartoon.

Sherrin places commas as fastidiously as he dresses, though a careless Weidenfeld blurb-writer almost betrays the elegance of the prose by describing the book as 'zesty'.

Television producers today seem to lack the perspective, the imagination, the sense of challenge which Sherrin brought to the job; but he himself can still be delightfully pungent about public affairs. Alasdair Milne, who already has *Boys from the Black Stuff* to his credit, could put another feather in his cap by restoring his former colleague to the box. □

When "Bonjour" is not enough . . .



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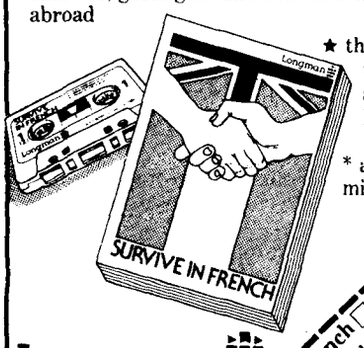

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FICTION
Roger Lewis

Cop art

Floating Dragon
PETER STRAUB *Collins* £9.95
Lamia
TRISTAN TRAVIS *Deutsch* £8.95
Holy Pictures
CLARE BOYLAN *Hamish Hamilton* £7.95
Not Not While the Giro
JAMES KELMAN *Polygon* £8.95 & £3.95

The epigraphs with which **Floating Dragon** is garlanded serve only to highlight what an ignoble, inept practitioner its author is when set against the names he and his publishers invoke. Henry James used the device of the supernatural as an alibi for testing sexual relations that stopped nowhere. Poe was a terrorist for whom spooks were agents in a game of mental detection. But then Straub hasn't actually written a ghost story: *Floating Dragon* is merely a catalogue of violent deaths gloatingly described. A veneer of occultism becomes a lazy method of explaining away inconsistencies. Indeed, *Floating Dragon* reads like the screenplay of a disaster movie or even a soap opera.

The spectre of the title is a noxious cloud leaked from a secret weapons factory. These foul vapours settle over a posh suburb of New York which is also about to have its tridecennial visitation from Gideon Winter, the Dragon, who in the 17th century raped, pillaged and spoiled crops. The combination of fiends, vacationing ghoul and chemical squall, turns the Connecticut township into a carnival of the grotesque: corpses walk abroad in unbecoming stages of decomposition; tots flee their nurseries at night to drown in the sea; the police shoot each other while watching *The Choirboys*; houses and householders spontaneously combust; orange spiders are emitted from the bowel.

Straub has been acclaimed as a 'master storyteller', but in fact his publishers are foolish not to have insisted upon ruthless editing. The numbing duration of the novel demonstrates only the limitations of his imagination not its fertility. Details are repeated and far too many characters introduced merely to do the same thing: die with theatrical aplomb. The ending shows authorial desperation, as the heroes join hands and sing the signature tune from a television show: Siegfried's war-cry demoted into a jingle.

Lamia, by contrast, is an excellent novel in this modern fantastical tradition. Again the emphasis is on the supernatural, but Travis adroitly turns his book on the pivot of its own literary precursors. We are in a Chicago cursed with a score of Reaper killings. All the victims were convicted or suspected felons: mainly rapists and molesters. Oddly, each cadaver has a ruptured heart as if 'the organ had simply self-destructed', and the chewed genitalia are void of all procreative juice. Travis then transports us back in time to witness the maturation of Libby, a child being brought up by a mad aunt who keeps her in the cellar. In this dungeon mean cousin Kevin devirginates her with the assistance of a live snake. As the reptile writhes and dies Libby looks into its eyes and feels an inexplicable kinship.

At a Chicago hospital some years later we find Libby, chubby and gauche, enrolled as a nurse. At a party she is encouraged to take a puff of pot and to the unease of her companions lapses into 'whistles, hisses, deep-throated moans and growls'. A nightmare follows in which she sees herself 'some crazed, amphibious creature from another age'. She makes what would seem a suicidal leap into the river, yet survives.

Meantime the police are baffled by the sequence of murders. Valjohn, who leads the enquiry, is an amateur artist of minor fame who assembles Rauschenbergian collages as 'a visual log of his investigative career' and is dubbed by the press the 'cubist cop'. He is suddenly confronted with a vital clue: that on each of the Reaper victims a trace of vaginal fluid is discovered. This was overlooked hitherto as 'in the investigation of sex crimes, semen was the Holy Grail'. The Mayor is outraged that the adversary should be a lady: it is undignified for his macho city. An ex-cop recalls with fondness his days humiliating rape victims: 'their oh-so-sad stories – all weep and woozy and shamefaced.'

It is against states of mind like this that Lamia exists to exact revenge. Travis's murderess is a descendant of Keats's enchantress, and we are reminded that the fiction can call upon other fables to give it credibility. Spenser's Duessa lurks within the character as does a version of the tale by Thomas Hood and William Morris's *The Lady of the Land*. Travis's thriller manages its literary themes without being pretentious. The erudition doesn't draw attention to itself but makes the novel into a macabre yet enjoyable game.

ENJOYABLE yes, but nasty. Novels today are replete with unpleasantness and it is perhaps in reaction to this that childhood has been sought as a refuge. **Holy Pictures** is another gaze at an enchanted past. Clare Boylan's prose, however, tries too hard to be tinged with poetry; only Dylan Thomas could evoke a Celtic childhood in this manner. Set in Dublin in the Twenties, it parades the usual tribulations of puberty: frumpy kisses, the menstrual sulks, a dreamed of trip to the glamorous movies. Perhaps the book would be better entitled *Wholly Pictures* for the effect is like a series of vignettes: magic lantern slides of a time gone by.

Not Not While the Giro is a book of crisp short stories that would complement the snapshots of Clare Boylan. Kelman was once a compositor, and his fictions have the feel of newspaper articles. We are given a reporter's facts, that is all. His titles are like headlines. Yet there is more skill in a single Kelman tale than in all of Straub's flabby incubus. □

FILMS
John Coleman

Oscar wild

The Verdict (15)
Odeon, Leicester Square
Frances (15)
ABCs, Shaftesbury Avenue and Fulham Road
My Favourite Year (PG)
Plaza, ABCs, Shaftesbury Avenue, Bayswater and Fulham Road
A Question of Silence (15)
Paris Pullman; Screen on the Green

They haven't really thrown away that old Hollywood mould, as a glance at this week's product from America surely establishes. Sidney Lumet's **The Verdict** is up for five Oscars; and, for all its professional virtues, that can only indicate a general harking back to the tried-and-true formulas of yesteryear.

Drawn by David Mamet from a novel by writer-attorney Barry Reed, starring Paul Newman as Frank Galvin, a near-alcoholic ambulance-chasing lawyer, set mainly in wintry Boston, it sets out – with Lumet's pretty reliable craft – to have the best of several genres: the courtroom or Perry Mason thriller; the exposure of malpractices (here medical and legal); the redemption of a cynical burnt-out case through a sudden flash of his lost humanity; and the sheer, Capra-corn trustworthiness of John and Jane Doe when the chips are down. No one should (or is likely to) forget that Lumet's first feature film was *Twelve Angry Men*.

Newman's bleary, then triumphant Galvin, hottest tip for an Academy Award, is impressive enough, if over-encouraged to hold meaningful pauses while we supply the moral turmoil churning behind those tired blue eyes. His greatest performance it isn't, since the script won't allow it. Acting for the relatives of a young woman in permanent coma after anaesthesia during labour, this Galvin is ready to settle out of court, take the money and run. Bishop Brophy, whose archdiocese runs the offending hospital has offered $210,000, of which a third will be the attorney's. But, visiting the vegetable in her ward, Galvin snaps a couple of polaroids. The camera watches them develop on her bed while we guess-watch an awareness of what is truly at stake – good old justice – in Galvin: this is the all-too-glib turning-point. And although the fellow's dangerous intake of alcohol seems to continue as he decides to go to trial after all, the threatened problem aspects of this drinking simply never materialise during a week of frenzied activity. There is also the matter of his cloudy relationship with one Laura (Charlotte Rampling), picked up in a bar, soon comfortingly in bed with him, but then

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Paul Newman and Charlotte Rampling cloudily relating in 'The Verdict'

going over (or back?) to the other side when Galvin's new resolve weakens after a succession of dirty tricks by the defence. 'I can't invest in failure, Frank, any more,' she explains. A phone rings and rings at the very end, leaving their choppy relationship all in doubt: the real doubt lies in what it is doing in the movie in the first place.

In supporting and attacking roles, Jack Warden and James Mason are superb, the first as Galvin's staunch, rumply pal and colleague Mick, the second as Concannon, ultra-smooth, hotshot counsel for the negligent doctor, assisted by a whole team of smug juniors. Mick spells him out for Galvin: 'He's a good man? He's the prince of fucking darkness'. This and the briefly seen, worldly bishop apart, there are odd little churchy intimations elsewhere: stained-glass windows, a moment in the hospital chapel, a low-angle shot of Galvin in his bleak office that lends it a cenobitic air. But these scraps hardly cohere into a religious metaphor of any significance. Lumet cracks off with splendid quick details: Galvin, beer-glass in hand, playing a pinball machine; Galvin slipping a bill as bribe to a funeral parlour manager; Galvin, hands too shaky, lowering his head to sip at a brimming shot-glass. It is quite classy and alert stuff. It is also heavily predictable. When Newman/Galvin ends his short, plain man's summation to the jury with 'I believe there is justice within our hearts', that verdict is dreamily in the bag. It always was, of course: signed, sealed and delivered.

Our trusty companion down the years, the biopic, and in especial the biopic incestuous – of an ex-Hollywood starlet drastically on the skids – is redeemed in Graeme Clifford's uninspired first feature, **Frances,** by the chameleon talent of Jessica Lange in the title role. God knows it needs to be chameleon, given the extraordinary elusiveness and personality shifts of Frances Farmer (1914-1970), a Thirties actress in movies of no great account, whose chief passion was the stage (she starred in Clifford Odets's *Golden Boy* and had a disastrous affair with its author) and whose chief delight was in letting an outraged Hollywood know it. The real Farmer, a blonde beauty of probably untapped acting ability on film, seems to have been a mean lady, born of a driving mama, Lillian (welcome return of Kim Stanley, also fine, in *Frances),* and a feeble, mostly absentee dad. Fate gave her bad breaks in other directions with some frequency, she drank heavily, had run-ins with the constabulary, was committed finally by inscrutably awful Lillian to a hellish loonie bin, from which she emerged, lobotomised, later to appear as a freak on American TV's *This Is Your Life* in 1958, which is where the 139 muddled minutes of the movie stop.

In pursuing some of this aberrant existence, Eric Bergren, Christopher DeVore and Nicholas Kazan (the first two of whom also worked on that tale of another freak, *The Elephant Man*) have beavered away to assemble true highlights and low moments, though – as in *Mommie Dearest* – we never see Miss Farmer actually act. We do see, in recompense, Lange, who manages the passage of time, from Francis writing her prize-winning school essay, 'God Dies' (what else?), at 16, to that oddly head-angled and robotic TV appearance 27 years on, taking in mirthful treatment of studio bigwigs, evil giggles with a pompous psychiatrist, battered and raped resilience in an asylum ward out of Bosch. She *is* the film; and even her marvellous transformations leave the piece somehow uninvolving. The filmed indignities and injustices are too overwhelming for any reaction except numbness; and the invention of a recurring friend and lover (Sam Shepard) is just hopeful, importing no useful extra dimension.

Richard Benjamin's debut as director, **My Favourite Year,** has another Oscar nominee, Peter O'Toole, looking like an unwell John Carradine rather than a swashbuckling Errol Flynn, doing his valiant best in a treacly comedy about his appearance as guest alcoholic romantic movie star on a 1954 show like Sid Caesar's. Mark Linn-Baker is nice as his young Jewish minder. There are five excellent jokes, drowned out by residual pathos. The Dutch feminist **A Question of Silence** tries to trap my gender in Catch-22: the hell with it – simplistic and silly. **Kuhle Wampe** (Academy One), meanwhile warmly recommended, must wait till next week. □

TELEVISION

William Boyd

Valediction

THIS IS my last TV column for the *NS*. When I started – getting on for two years ago – there were three TV channels. Now, effectively, there are six. One hell of a lot to watch, though it's a sufficient tribute to Channel 4 to say that any column could happily fill its inches with C4's output and find plenty to commend, be stimulated by and complain about. Channel 4 is fulfilling its brief admirably, it seems to me. Some tinkering with the programming is still required – some leavening, some rearranging – but it should steadily gain adherents as long as the lowest common denominator theory doesn't come into play.

Which brings me to breakfast television. As TV-AM's ratings fall off a cliff there are wild shouts of going down-market. Both sides, I thought, had just about bottomed out as far as that factor was concerned and one's tempted (these valedictory pieces require it) to enjoin them both not to let the quality or the content slip any further. H. L. Mencken said that no-one ever went broke under-estimating the taste of the American people. A glance at our tabloids quickly establishes that what goes for them goes for us too, and thoughts of an early morning war to win the hearts and minds of the British people give rise to the nightmare spectre of breakfast television programmes competing on the level of the *Sun* and the *Star*. Keep it easygoing and relaxed, sure, but don't let it get like that.

Farewells also prompt the usual thanks to correspondents – friendly, informative, hectoring, abusive and anonymous. I'm glad to say I never received the apocryphal jiffy bag, damp and strangely soft with that unpleasant odour . . . but I did get a lot of letters on a subject I raised almost inadvertently in the *NS* and which resulted in my going on TV to explain myself further. This was the vexed question of film versus video. To be fair, the subject has generated most interest within the industry itself, but it's one that any viewer should be at least aware of as the outcome of the debate will determine the quality of the image you receive on your set.

It all started with a dissatisfaction on my part over the differences in picture quality I could discern between programmes or parts of programmes shot outside on film and parts shot inside in the studio. It soon became clear that it wasn't simply a difference between atmospheres. Virtually everything you see shot in a studio is shot on electronic video cameras. These provide a sharper, more highly focussed image and also require higher lighting levels. Hence the characteristic glare and dark shadows of the typical studio production. Film, by

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contrast, is much more sensitive and can register all manner of degrees of light.

Now for certain types of programme this intense light and shade is irrelevant: chat shows, news, panel games, etc. But when it comes to drama my contention is that it is highly deleterious. The blazing lights, the sharply defined image, the knife-edged shadows that prevail work against the naturalism that almost all TV drama strives for. It all looks highly artificial, especially when, as happens in many plays or series, the video sequences are intercut with filmed exterior shots. In my opinion there is no argument about which looks the more realistic – film does. Consequently, any drama that has to use video or video-ed sequences labours under a considerable handicap: it's that much harder to gain the necessary suspension of disbelief.

I concede that this could be some idiosyncratic response of my own, brought about by too many hours in front of a television set, but the difference between the quality of the film and video image is so evident now that I cannot ignore it. All I see is harsh light beaming down from above. The easiest way to tell if you're watching filmed or video-ed drama is to look at the top of the characters' heads: on video the hair is always lit up, everyone wears a skull cap of light.

The irritating fact about the whole controversy is that it needn't exist. What we regard as the typical television video image is not so much a product of technological deficiencies in the video cameras as a result of superannuated production values and approaches. We're in a studio working with video, the pattern seems to run, so switch on every light in the place. The fact is that it is perfectly possible to produce drama shot on video with all the subtlety and evocativeness that can be achieved with film, as was so convincingly established by Richard Eyre's marvellous production of *The Cherry Orchard* last year on BBC-2 (a repeat soon, please). It may take a little longer, it may be slightly more expensive, but if costs and new technology are going to make film redundant then we must ensure that what we replace it with isn't so palpably inferior.

Looking back over two years of TV reviewing I found myself idly wondering how much I'd actually written. Swift computations delivered a total of some 80,000 words. Good God, I thought, that's almost the same as writing a sizeable novel! Which is exactly what I propose to go and do now. □

We say goodbye to William Boyd with gratitude and with regret. Next week we shall be welcoming Hugo Williams to the television column.

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One of the questions Caryl Churchill put to her fellow-feminists in *Top Girls*, now happily returned to the Royal Court, was this. What have you, or indeed anyone, to offer the woman who hasn't the mental wherewithal ever to overtake the men on the promotion ladder, run her own office, jet off to New York for meetings and California for holidays, and do all the greater and lesser things associated with 'making it' in our sabre-toothed society? By way of illustrating the problem, she introduced a podgy, dim Ipswich schoolgirl, Angie, the unwanted daughter of her high-achieving protagonist, Marlene; and, by way of expanding and expatiating upon it, she now takes us to the opposite end of the East Anglian peninsular, to a fen village where Angies are to be found over every other sink, and thwarted and sometimes embittered Marlenes in every second potato patch.

The stage at the Almeida is a rectangle of soil that doubles as floorboards, lino or Axminster carpet whenever the action takes us inside the characters' cottages. It is unaltering and, it seems, inescapable. The village girls may, and do, sing little ditties about becoming hairdressers and nurses, but their likely destination is always out there in the wind and rough weather, toiling for the farmers as their grandmothers did and their granddaughters presumably will. Since the five-woman, one-man cast doubles, trebles, even quadruples its roles, we meet a fair spread of such victims, most resigned to being half-buried by the local sod ('what you after, bluebird of happiness?') and one or two putting up some fragile show of resistance ('don't start on me, just because you had nothing yourself').

In the latter category is Angela, who persistently torments her stepdaughter, partly out of personal frustration, partly to goad the girl out of her maddening submissiveness; and in it, too, is Val, who has left husband and children for a farm-labourer, Frank. There is an enervating hopelessness about both relationships, but especially about the second, drifting (as it does) from dumps to doldrums and beyond. Valium, the pub, evangelical religion – none of the community's usual nostra can apparently rescue Val from her own particular dilemma, which is that she can't live without her children and can't live without Frank either. It would be wrong to give away the precise denouement of a play that powerfully demonstrates Ms Churchill's gift for crispness and tension, for vivid, succinct dialogue that keeps you alert and guessing; but you will hardly be surprised to learn that among these glum tillers and doleful sowers there should eventually appear a Grim Reaper.

You could of course argue that what destroys Val is not so much imprisonment-with-hard-labour in the village, rather an inner conflict that could be found in Kensington, the Cayman Islands, or anywhere else women are trying and failing to reconcile the claims of the sexual and the maternal. In fact, there were several times when I myself wondered whether Ms Churchill wasn't over-simplifying the nature and degree of the blame to be apportioned for the wasted and blasted lives she was showing us. If the City conglomerates gave back the land to the farmers, and the farmers were then forced to distribute it among their serfs, as no doubt should in justice happen, would the quality of life in far-off Fen country really improve as thoroughly as the play implies? Is it so much less paralysing to the mind and spirit to drudge from sun to sun in a potato field which happens to belong to you?

Yet Ms Churchill would no doubt expect us to ask such questions. Her distaste for the economic and social status quo doesn't mean she's relentlessly deterministic when she comes to analyse character and conduct; nor is her play without its complexities, its acknowledged contradictions and uncertainties, its beguiling quirks and intriguing oddities. *Top Girls* is probably the finer work, because it possesses those selfsame qualities in greater abundance and because it has a more unusual and arresting point to make: liberation is only a subtler, uglier form of enslavement if women have to maim, mutilate and be-Thatcher themselves in order to achieve it. But *Fen* offers proof enough of the assurance and skill, intelligence and passion of a dramatist who must surely be rated among the half-dozen best now writing.

It's sometimes hard to tell who's who, when there's so much shifting from character to character, but the acting of the Joint Stock Group, under the baton of Les Waters, admirably combines precision with punch. And so, to an almost greater degree, do the three players in Peter Gill's production of his own triangle-drama **Kick for Touch.** To hear Jane Lapotaire suddenly, powerfully injecting 'don't go out' into a casual conversation between Ken Cranham, her husband, and James Hazeldine, his brother and her sometime lover – to hear that is like experiencing a great throb of the cello in a quiet passage for two oboes.

Actually, the play often puts one in mind of chamber music, with its deftly patterned encounters and graceful variations on key words and phrases; and it has to be admitted that its melodic ideas aren't always immediately accessible, given its abrupt jumps from time to time, situation to situation, speaker to speaker. Yet gradually we begin to feel the strength of these strange, shifting relationships and by the end the heat is undeniable. Imagine a collaboration between Haydn, Beckett and an oxyacetylene torch; and you've got it. □

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MUSIC
Andrew Clements

For the record

Britten: Orchestral works
RATTLE *EMI* ASD 4177
Britten: Canticles
PEARS *Argo* ZRG 946
Tippett: Triple Concerto
DAVIS *Philips* 6514 209
Shostakovich: Symphony no. 5
HAITINK *Decca* SXDL 7551

We may be no nearer an edition of Benjamin Britten's diaries or letters, or a biography with full access to them, but there is a steady and satisfying flow of unpublished music coming to the surface and getting itself on record. Simon Rattle's disc with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra brings first recordings of four works, two of which, *Young Apollo* and the Four French Songs, have only been published since Britten's death. *Canadian Carnival* and the *Scottish Ballad* were issued soon after their first performances in 1939 and 1941 respectively, but revivals have been infrequent and it's useful to have such well groomed performances readily available, though neither work is earth-shattering. Both use folk songs as source material, unexpectedly harmonised and woven into the fabric of music that is anything but the pallid; the pungency of the *Carnival* especially makes one wonder why it has not been used more often as a concert opener.

More remarkable are *Apollo* and the Songs. The settings of Hugo and Verlaine are as convincing a demonstration of Britten's genius as one could hope to find, all completed and scored for soprano and orchestra before he was 15. Their assurance is staggering, as is the confident absorption of influences especially Debussy and Ravel, composers who would seem unlikely models for the mature Britten. Already there, too, is the ability to find the precise musical metaphor for a verbal image – a solo oboe for the anonymous weeper in Verlaine's 'Sagesse', a flute for the orphaned child in Hugo's 'L'Enfance'. Jill Gomez lends the songs a warm, appropriately delicate tone; of all Britten's juvenilia these are the most impressive, as in a different way is *Young Apollo*, a short orchestral poem of 1939 for piano (the inexhaustible Peter Donohoe here), string quartet and string orchestra. The concept of ideal beauty is a theme that runs through Britten's music right up to *Death in Venice* and *Phaedra*, but in this first exploration it is the ebullience of the string writing and the unquenchable energy of the music that makes the deepest impact.

The reissuing together of the five canticles Britten wrote at various times for Peter Pears and a variety of accompanying instruments is a sensible move; they have previously been available only in an odd assortment of couplings. The earliest, settings of Francis Quarles's 'My beloved is mine' and the Chester miracle play *Abraham and Isaac*, remain the freshest and most original, though there are some fine things to be found elsewhere, especially in the last, *The Death of Saint Narcissus*, with Pears accompanied by Osian Ellis's harp. The performances, need one say, are definitive.

One's pleasure in finding Tippett's Triple Concerto available on disc so soon after its premiere in a performance by the original players is tempered by the discovery that the record company has seen fit to spread the 33-minute work across two sides of the LP. Not only is violence done to the careful scheme of movements and transitions that Tippett devised; little over half-an-hour of music is quite unacceptable at a time when recording techniques allow more than that on a single side. That complaint out of the way, however, everything else about the release is first rate. The close digital sound picks up all the colouristic effects in the score that were often lost in the concert hall; the soloists – Gyorgy Pauk, Nobuko Imai and Ralph Kirshbaum – have gained in mastery over their difficult parts and play with great freedom.

The result confirms the concerto as Tippett's finest work since at least the Third Symphony, and arguably his best for orchestra to date. The unhappy series of pieces that began with *The Ice Break* is brought to an end. There are no awkwardnesses here, no unproductive demands on instrumental technique; the writing for the three soloists seems totally idiomatic and the orchestral playing (from the LSO under Colin Davis) shows none of the strain that has marred even the finest accounts of the Fourth Symphony. The central slow movement, a heavenly song for the three soloists, is surely Tippett's most glorious inspiration.

Bernard Haitink's series of Shostakovich symphonies for Decca has been one of the most unexpected pleasures of the last few years' releases. And if on paper his version of the Fifth seemed likely to be the most dispensable so far, that is far from the case. Haitink uses the Concertgebouw Orchestra on its finest form and demonstrates the essentially tragic character of the symphony, the finale not a triumphant celebration but a hollow, desperate deceit, the scherzo savagely cynical, the slow movement deathly still. In a single performance by a great conductor the fifth symphony becomes a prodigious achievement, without the need for special pleading by Russian 'specialists', without histrionics. It beats all other versions of the work out of sight □

NEW STATESMAN INDEX

The index to Vol. 103 (January-June 1982) is available, price £1.50, post free, from the publisher: 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

PERFORMANCE
Mary Harron

Switching channels

Laurie Anderson
Dominion Theatre

I used to think Laurie Anderson was about the telephone, but her performances are very much about television. The electronic experience is her great theme: the way so much of our contact with the world now comes to us via remote control. Any attempt to find linear meanings in her work is doomed to failure, because *United States 1-4* is about switching channels. This multi-media event actually recreates the television experience by using a big screen, a narrator's voice, background music – but the narrator is alive before us, the stage is three-dimensional, there is a large audience and there is none of that remote, vicarious experience of watching that square grey screen at home.

In television the images received by switching channels are totally arbitrary. The Laurie Anderson station offers more unity in the experience, more patterning, because these fragmented images of the American technological landscape have been chosen by one woman and reflect her concerns. However, the real unity comes from Anderson's presence and from her role as conductor; a slight, androgynous figure who appears to be firmly, gently, and confidently in control.

Anderson is interested in all the media, and her witty anecdotes often sounded like clippings from the *National Enquirer* (a psychotic American version of the *News of the World*): bizarre, disconnected tales of everyday American life. She has a magpie sensibility, and one shouldn't read too much into her juxtapositions. Because *United States* was presented in a theatre, as both a music and an art event, the temptation was to see the six-hour performance as the build-up to a final revelation, as if each song and anecdote were another piece in a jig-saw whose pattern would eventually become clear.

In *United States*, however, the medium really is the message, and its function is to heighten our awareness of how our experience is filtered. Like films and television, its effect was hypnotic and dream-like, as we were held by her quiet, oddly beautiful, soothing mid-Western voice. On the second night I fell asleep briefly, woke up refreshed and lost myself in another pool of imagery. No matter. The ideal Laurie Anderson performance would go on not for eight hours but for days, as the audience slept, ate, wandered in and out of this remarkable distillation of the outside world. □

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DANCE
Stephanie Jordan

Odds on

Extemporary Dance Theatre
The Place

A few months ago, Extemporary Dance dropped the collective 'Company' and became 'Theatre' with the intention of broadening its scope beyond in-house abstraction, reaching wider audiences, permanently experimental but handling contemporary themes.

This intention, shared by several British choreographers, some commissioned by this company, has certainly been resoundingly successful in the regions. In a repertoire that has changed rapidly since Emilyn Claid assumed the directorship in 1981, the additions this season most of all reinforce that policy.

The most exciting acquisition is American Karole Armitage's *It Happened at Club Bombay Cinema* which shoots a series of live and screen images at breakneck speed. Both visually and musically, the artifice of Hollywood and the Indian Cinema contrasts luridly with urban violence and daily ugliness. It is dangerous and vicious (Armitage calls it 'electric'), bathed in the assault of glaring shafts of coloured light. Yet, it is also a classical dance, presenting a brutalised application of the Cunningham vocabulary that Armitage knows so well. This does not deny the beauty of elegant blocking and taut, extended line, or the contained enjoyment of power and virtuosity.

In *Naples*, Fergus Early returns to the theatrical traditions of 19th-century classical ballet, but derives humour from clashing this world, particularly that of the idealised *Napoli* of Auguste Bournonville and popular imagination, against its modern counterpart: the noisy city of the Lambretta, strings of washing (a delightful setting by Craig Givens that extended above the audience at The Place), *gelati*, transistor radios, televised football and vociferous locals, a dandy in undress, a vamp, an amorous pasta chef. To this, Early adds sexual role-reversal: Claid as a scooter boy and Yaakov Slivkin as a black clad Mamma. Using the original score, the choreography draws on the old ballet, sometimes in detail, sometimes not at all. Although slack at the joins, the work bristles with acute observations; if the dancers, who are not classicists, better understood the nuances and rhythms of Bournonville style, it would be even better fun.

Lloyd Newson's plea for tolerance, *Breaking Images*, is a statement so personal that his courage in making it is admirable. His conspicuous baldness is the focus of a piece that depicts the vulnerable mortal lurking inside the body-freak and the s.-and-m. merchant. It is a bit of a shocker, asking few questions after one viewing, but well executed.

Other recent works provide powerful theatrical content but don't tear at the subject matter sufficiently to draw much blood from the statement. Thus Jacky Lansley's *Speaking Part* in which the dancer/actress exposes the pain and grit behind public glamour. Certainly, Corrine Bougaard's performance barely explores the issues with conviction.

It is a promising and familiar device to turn humans into animals, imposing aspects of human temperament on animal behaviour. In *Giraffes and Jellyfish and Things*, Sally Owen adopts this expedient while the theme of evolution provides continuity. Charles Darwin (as cellist) sits on a rostrum decked with ferns, witness to the prehistoric procession from amoeba through to apes, finally performer before an 'audience' of far from perfectly evolved humans. The various creatures have fired Owen's imagination unevenly. At a more exalted level of inspiration by virtue of structural and pictorial ingenuity is the solo for Lloyd Newson as chameleon, an extraordinarily jointed, back-rippling reptile whose slow stalking and alert basking finally breaks out into the hasty sloughing of one leotard after another.

Solo is Claid's gift to Annelies Stoffel, a development from body language that uses contact microphone sounds made by the dancer in performance. The remarkable virtue of the piece is its power to extract the thrill of this small woman, an unassuming charm formed from precise definition of gesture or the channelled energy of a human dynamo.

Stoffel is a tremendous asset, so are the other Claid recruits, Edgar Newman with his eccentric wit and the versatile Newson. Strong personalities suit the new Extemporary image. The dancers are adaptable, dissimilar in style. In the present repertoire, they are seen to best advantage where the level of dance content is highest. □

WEEKEND COMPETITION

No 2759 **Set by Anne Dante**

The Times lurched further downmarket this week by introducing a quick crossword. What other features from the popular press might it adopt – an agony column, a horoscope? Extracts, please, from one of these, suitably tailored for readers of the Thunderer. Up to 120 words, by 11 March.

No 2756 **Set by Sir Gel**

Advertising copy for the government's defence policy.

Report **By Al Dente**

Some excellent one-liners. Inevitably, someone came up with 'Cruiseless isn't good for you' (D. A. Prince, to be precise). Tony Meredith's selling slogan was 'Peace isn't working. Give war a chance'. I also liked May Day's suggestion that Mrs Thatcher could appear in front of a missile and say 'Give us the tools and we'll finish the job'. Three quid for each of these; nine apiece to the ads below.

(Shot of bedraggled vagrants, searching through dump at dawn)
Voice: Condemned. Condemned to live out in the open, or in ancient caravans, to wear ponchos and to listen to folk music. To suffer Aldermaston foot, and to eat raw carrot. Their source of warmth a feeble fire built of discarded banners. These are the homeless. These are the CND.
(Cross-fade to same people, dressed in smart casuals, sipping unidentified cocktails around an old stone fireplace)
So why not join the Trident tribe? They're young, they're happy, they have every modern convenience. And yes, they've even got an air-raid shelter. It's called a roof over their heads. So come on in – to the safety of Trident Homes. Built by the government, to last until the end of time.
WILL BELLENGER

Picture a ruthless burglar intent on breaking into a house. He sees one worth robbing and approaches – jemmy in hand.

But wait!

A sign on the gate says 'Beware of the Dog'. The burglar hears barking – the dog sounds fierce – the burglar imagines its fangs sinking into his flesh. What does he do?

Right! He panics and backs away. He'll look for an unguarded house.

Look! That's where the unilateralists live. They've got rid of their dog. How foolish! In goes the burglar and if the occupants protest – he'll cosh them senseless!

In which house would you rather live?

This government intends having a big dog to protect us all. He's called Cruise.

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W.H. (wryly): I'll believe that when I see it.
M.V.: Then just try the 'flash' test. Look, we used your conventional deterrent on one of the cities in this simulated film, and new Cruise on the other.
W.H.: Heavens, it's true! Things look even deader with Cruise. And it goes further.
M.V.: Yes! New Cruise is so powerful you won't even have to open the packet! Complete with payload-back guarantee! N. J. WARBURTON

FIRST PERSON

Jeremy Lewis

Sleep it off

I HAVE A COMPLAINT to make about the medical profession. It concerns the tone of condescension with which some doctors will dismiss the most plausible-sounding arguments for fringe medicine. No doubt, 99 per cent of their professional scepticism is justified; but as someone with a soft spot for

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cranks, I couldn't suppress a self-satisfied smirk when I learnt, recently, that some doctors are beginning to take a more positive interest in hypnosis – that exotic stamping ground (I used to imagine) of the con-man and the charlatan.

I became aware of hypnosis about ten years ago, when my wife decided to give up smoking. In those days she was a 40-a-day merchant: the first sign of life was a pair of hands groping blindly from under the sheets towards the ciggies on the bedside table. Willpower, pills, repulsive sticks of chewing gum were all enrolled in vain; then, as a facetious last resort, she went to a hypnotist in Wimpole Street. A retired policeman in Pirelli slippers, he spoke to her in sensible tones about the folly of fags – without, alas, swinging a fob watch or flashing Svengali hands and eyes – and charged her a week's housekeeping for the privilege. She hasn't touched a ciggie since. Recently, I've heard of more and more people going to hypnotists to give up smoking, but at the time her visit provoked much mirth and incredulity.

A few years later, I decided to try it for myself – this time for insomnia. A local hypnotist was recommended to me by friends: he had, apparently, worked wonders with their daughter's asthma – not curing it, of course, but winning her a breathing space for days, even weeks, on end. He turned out to be a retired major with a pleasingly dubious double-barrelled name. When I rang to make my appointment I was answered by a loud, angry voice. Quite a few hypnotists appear to be pensioned-off wing-commanders or lieutenant-colonels – bustling, peppery men, of the kind who harried us laggards in the prep-schools of my youth, but are no longer *persona grata* in the world of Dip Eds and Teacher Training Colleges. Those who have not become hypnotists no doubt eke out their lives as chicken-farmers.

The major's 'practice' was in a suburban street in south London – in one of those large Edwardian semis that combine Tudor gables, classical cornices, and blood-red stained-glass on either side of the front door and are shielded from the road by dripping evergreens. I rang the bell and a furious, rasping noise burst from the answering device beneath. Before I had time to run for it, the door had opened . . . the major was beckoning me in.

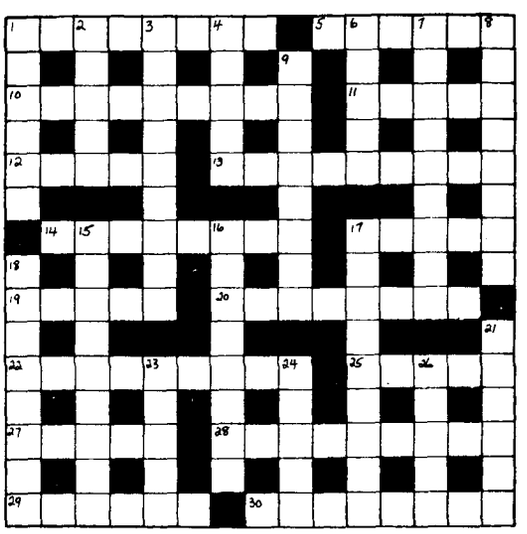
Like my wife's retired policeman, he was sporting a pair of Pirelli slippers – perhaps they have special mesmeric powers – plus cavalry twill trousers, an open-necked apple-green shirt and a maroon cardigan that had seen better days. He explained rather crossly that he was in the middle of treating someone else and that I would have to wait my turn, and left me standing in the hall, which smelt strongly of boiled cabbage. All was quiet, save for the voice of the major angrily exhorting his client to give up smoking.

I was rescued by his assistant, a sympathetic lady who whisked me off to her consultancy, a bleak little room in the middle of which stood a large and rather grubby-looking armchair. She sat me down and told me to take off my shoes and put my feet up on a footstool (had I changed my socks recently?) – then asked me to close my eyes and concentrate on relaxing every part of my body from the toes upwards – much as one does in yoga or, I gather, antenatal classes. As soon as I seemed suitably relaxed, she told me that she was going to make me lift my forearm until it stood at right angles from the armrest; and, with that, she began to urge my arm into action. To my shame and embarrassment, nothing happened: my arm remained exactly where it was, the smell of cabbage was as potent as ever, from the floor below I could hear the major bawling at his client ('YOU-WILL-NOT-SMOKE-AGAIN-YOU-WILL-NOT-CRAVE-A-CIGARETTE'). I was about to open my eyes and explain that I was awfully sorry when – to my relief and surprise – my arm drifted into an upright position. From that moment on, I was hooked.

However unpromising the major's set-up, it certainly worked within its modest range of expectations. Doubtless aware of medical hostility or scepticism, the major and his assistant were scrupulously anxious to make it clear that they had absolutely no medical pretensions and that medical problems should be referred to one's doc, not them. But half an hour a week did wonders for my insomnia, at least in the short term; more importantly, my sessions in the major's semi forced me to relax (there was nothing to do in that bleak little room except to lie back and listen to the hypnotist droning pleasantly on) and I always left feeling a good deal more cheerful than when I'd arrived. Far better, I felt – and still feel – for the overwrought to visit their local equivalent of the major than to swallow the mountains of tranquilisers that hard-pressed doctors shell out; more entertaining, too. □

Weekend Crossword 1392

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct entries opened. Entries to Crossword 1392, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, by first post 8 March.



Name_____

Address_____

_____

_____

ACROSS

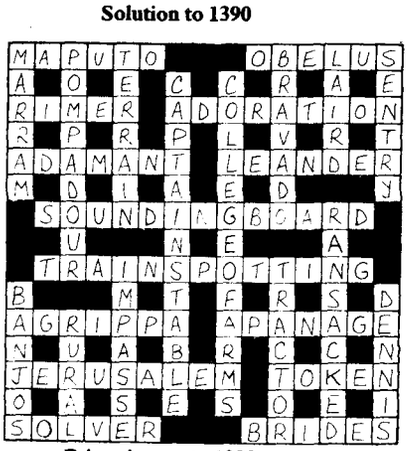
1. It is sweet having a short time with girls. (8)
5. Unfit for vessels. (6)
10. High spot for look-out when summit is without snowdrift. (9)
11. Composer who puts everything into one note. (5)
12. Misuse of the law as terror strikes. (5)
13. Officers provide gratuities for employees. (9)
14. The veil gives one a mysterious power without work. (8)
17. Love club? (5)
19. Satisfied but gloomy about half term. (5)
20. Food exists with the copper in pieces. (8)
22. Payment which is small included in the unstarted surplus. (9)
25. The fate of man is to be a serf. (5)
27. Fear of cheap literature? (5)
28. Intimated one gave one's name to about everything. (9)
29. The time to cut an author. (6)
30. For the members railways take precedence over the rest. (8)

DOWN

1. Birds which put a bird noise into writing. (6)
2. Appears vaguely like machines. (5)
3. Order speeds cut since it is not to be trusted. (9)
4. Operate like a famous exponent without a piano. (5)
6. One among the deprived has to readjust. (5)
7. Weather situation when there is snow at the seaside? (4, 5)
8. Final turn nearly all given by old actress. (8)
9. Temporary measures by the dentist? (8)
15. Weapons produce misfortune in thin red line. (9)
16. Without a general these people would be reduced to evil things. (8)
17. A direction is provided so use that freely. (9)
18. Like a pale mother in Egypt. (5, 3)
21. Measures needed when about five hundred chairs are put up. (6)
23. Jam western border. (5)
24. Keen but middle-aged. (5)
26. Town for a pianist with only one note. (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1390



Prizewinners to 1390

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LISTINGS

THUR 24 FEB

LONDON E1 Auschwitz Exhibition. 10am-6pm Mon. to Fri., 10am-9pm Wed., 12.30-6pm Sun., St George's in the East Church, Cannon Street Road. Auschwitz Education Committee. **01-481 8251.**

LONDON SW1 Muhammad Idrish Defence Campaign. Picket 2.45pm Home Office Buildings, Queen Anne's Gate. **021-523 8923.**

FRI 25 FEB

LONDON W1 'Comprehensive Cuts' by Vic Jones at British Theatre Association, 9 Fitzroy Square (Warren Street tube). Every Thurs., Fri. and Sat. until 12 March. Unity Theatre. **01-387 2666** or **01-839 6967.**

LONDON WC1 1948 and 1984 The George Orwell Memorial Lecture by Julian Symons. 6.15pm in the Goldsmiths' Theatre, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Keppel Street, Gower Street. University of London Department of Extra-Mural Studies, 26 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DQ.

LONDON W1 Picket on anniversary of assassination of Tucapel Jimenez. 12am-2pm at Chilean Embassy. Social, to celebrate 30th anniversary of Chilean TUC, 7.30pm, NUFTO Hall, Jockey's Fields, London WC1 (off Theobalds Road). Chile Solidarity Campaign. **01-272 4298.**

SOUTHEND Peace and Disarmament. Stan Newens MP. 8pm Labour Hall, Cambridge Road. Southend Borough Labour Party. **0702 330695.**

SAT 26 FEB

LANCASTER March to oppose cruise and Trident. Assemble Ryelands Park 10.30am, move off at 11am, rally at 12 noon. Lancaster CND. **Lancaster 733057.**

KIDDERMINSTER March and rally from Summerfield Research Station 10.30am to Kidderminster Town Hall. Speakers 12 noon. Kidderminster CND. C/o Dandelion Cottage, Drakelow Lane, Wolverley.

LONDON WC1 CSE Law and State Group 2pm-5.30pm. Sunday, 27 Feb 11-4pm. Basement Seminar Room, Graduate Planning School, Architectural Association, 10-12 Percy Street. (Tottenham Court Road tube). Convenor: Sol Picciotto, School of Law, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL.

LONDON SE1 Labour's Trade Policy and Third World. One-day conference. Spkrs include John Smith MP, Adam Sharples. 10am at County Hall. £5 waged, £1 unwaged. Organised by Labour Aid and Development Committee and LEFTA. **01-408 1840.**

LONDON W14 A Calip Lead Workshop. 10am-3.45pm. Richmond Fellowship, 8 Addison Road. Org Conservation Society Pollution Working Party. **01-946 7542.**

MANCHESTER Ban Plastic Bullets: a Labour Movement delegate conference. 11am, UMIST, Barnes Wallis BUilding, Sackville Street. Contact Box 15, 164-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

GLASGOW First Glasgow Radical Book Fair. 10.00-5.30pm. McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street. Glasgow Collective, 488 Gt Western Road, G12.

OXFORD Conference on a new strategy for employment for the Labour Movement. Ruskin College. Organised by SERA Trade Union working group. **01-439 3749.**

MANCHESTER A Celebration of African Culture ((until 1 May). Historial Perspectives on Africa: Introduction – 25 Feb: 7.30-9.30pm. 26 Feb: 3-5.30pm and 7.30-11pm. Workers' Film Association, 9 Lucy Street, Manchester 15. **061-848 9782/5.**

LONDON W8 Commonwealth Institute's Guatemalan Study Day. Tour of exhibition and film 'The Heart of the Matter', 2-5pm. Kensington High Street, London W8. **01-609 0211.**

STOKE-ON-TRENT Benefit evening. 8pm. £1.50. Nightingales, Nad Sat Patio, Talbot Hotel, Stoke. Stoke-on-Trent CND. C/o 14 Gladstone Street, Basford.

SUN 27 FEB

LONDON W8 'Todos Santos' – a film of life in the Indian Village. 3pm Commonwealth Arts Centre Theatre, Kensington High Street. **01-602 3252.**

LONDON NW1 Sergio Godinho and Orchestre Jazira. 7.30pm at Camden Centre, Bidborough Street. Portugese Workers' Co-ordinating Committee. C/o 439 Harrow Road, London W10.

LONDON SE1 Campaign for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, a Jewish Initiative. Spkrs Uri Avneri, Dr Issam Sartawi. 6pm, County Hall. **01-790 5346.**

MON 28 FEB

LONDON W11 'Multilateralism: "A Safer Road to Peace"?' public debate 8pm. Spkrs William Goodheart, QC and Tony Hart. Methodist Church Hall basement, 232 Lancaster Road. Org Ladbroke Grove CND. **01-940 4957.**

LONDON SE14 Public meeting 'Southern Africa – the unreported war'. Spkrs Bob Hughes MP, Tony Gifford and representatives from Angola. 7.30pm, Deptford Town Hall, New Crosss Road. Org Royal Arsenal Co-operative Society Political & Education Committees and Mozambique-Angola Committee.

TUES 1 MAR

LONDON W5 World Food Shortage. Talk by Oliver Cowmeadow. 8pm, Parish Hall, Ealing Abbey, Marchwood Crescent (Ealing Broadway tube and BR). Org Ealing Friends of the Earth and World Development Action Group. **01-836 0142.**

LONDON SW1 Trade Union and Co-op Esperanto Group annual general meeting. Chair: Stan Newens MP. 6.30pm, House of Commons, Room 13. C/o 78 Thorpe Lea Road, Egham, Surrey.

WED 2 MAR

LIVERPOOL Merseyside Labour Briefing. Open editorial meeting. 8pm, Pig and Whistle, Covent Garden, Liverpool. C/o 60 Bala Street, Liverpool 4.

LONDON SW19 'Living in Multi-Cultural Societies': annual lecture by Rev. Michael Hollings MC MA. 7pm, The Athlone Hall, Southlands College, Wimbledon Parkside. Org Roehampton Institute School of Education.

LONDON SW1 'Towards Peace in the Middle East'. Spkr Lord Caradon. 7.30pm, House of Commons (room booked by Frank Allaun MP). Org Labour Action for Peace. **01-261 2619.**

THURS 3 MAR

LONDON N1 Marxism, the working class and the revolutionary party. Discussion to commemorate the Karl Marx centenary. 7.30pm, Camden Library, Regents Park branch, Compton Close, Roberts Street (Warren Street tube). Org North London Revolutionary Communist Party. **01-274 3951.**

LONDON W1 Capitalism in the US Sunbelt. Mike Davis (NLR) will outline the ongoing relocation of capital to the non-unionised South. 7.30pm, Black Horse, Rathbone Place. Org Conference of Socialist Economists London Forum. Details **01-286 6400.**

FORTHCOMING

5 MAR Manchester Energy Conference: CHP/District heating, acid rain, conservation, small-scale and renewables. 10am-6pm, County Hall, Piccadilly. C/o 29 Priestnall Road, Stockport SK4 3HW.

Leicester Poverty Pay: low wages in the 1980s conference. 11am-5.30pm. Vaughan College, St Nicholas Circle, Leicester. Org WEA Leicester Branch in association with University of Leicester Dept. of Adult Education and CPAG. Contact **Leicester 59740.**

Glasgow Scottish Education in the Year 2000 conference. 10am-4.30pm, Boyd Orr Building, University of Glasgow, University Avenue. Org University of Glasgow, Dept. Adult & Continuing Education. **041-339 8855 ex. 7535.**

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Meetings

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TRADE UNION and Co-op Esperanto Group AGM to be held at the House of Commons, Room 13, at 6.30 p.m. on 1 March 1983. Room booked by Stan Newens MP.

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